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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"Our members are predominatly interested in history. We have a color guard. We call them a living history museum."
– *Chris Nichols*

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ON THE COVER

A scene from Sharon, Conn. by Barb Blain, a member of the Newington Art League.

Submitted photo

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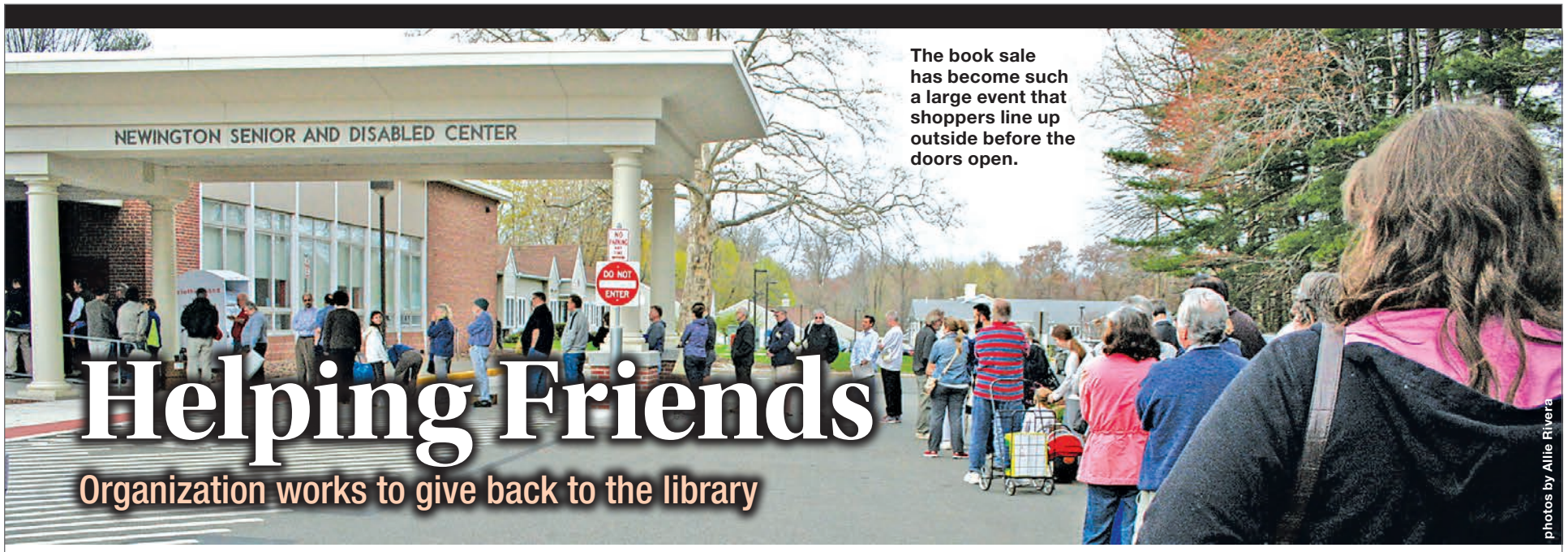

The book sale has become such a large event that shoppers line up outside before the doors open.

photos by Allie Rivera

Helping Friends

Organization works to give back to the library

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Every day, the Lucy Robbins Welles Library provides resources, programming and entertainment for residents free of charge. While the library does secure most of its funding from the town budget, there is one group that works tirelessly to ensure that its needs are always met.

The Friends of the Lucy Robbins Welles Library is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising funds and awareness of the library.

"It's a hard-working group of people and they're very dedicated to what they're doing."
– Lisa Masten

"We're here to assist the library in any way and to offset their operating costs," President Brian Wood explained.

The Friends was founded in 1961. Wood said the group fell apart a bit in the late 1970s, then reconstituted itself in 1979 and has been strong ever since.

He joined the organization 12 years ago at the request of his wife, Mary, who currently serves as the treasurer.

"I pulled him into it," she said with a small laugh.

According to her husband, membership in the Friends is between 700 and 800, with 15 people serving on the advisory board and 20 to 30 other active members.

The group holds an open meeting at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month. They provide updates on upcoming fundraisers and discuss further ways to assist the library.

The largest fundraiser that the group holds is its biannual book sale held at the Newington Senior and Disabled Center across the street. Throughout the year, the Friends accept donations of books and volunteer to sort the items that come in.

Then, with the help of other volunteers and local Boy Scouts troops, they pack up and transport all of the books to the senior center.

Both Brian and Mary Wood said the Friends is a community-oriented organization, and to continue in that ideal the group has begun allowing town employees, including school teachers, to attend the sale early by invitation.

Additionally, under the suggestion of Vice President Terry Buganski, the Friends began reaching out to local non-profit organizations to collect unsold books that they may need once the sale is over.

"We just started this last year and there are at least 10 different organizations that came in," Brian Wood said.

Another large fundraiser is the annual wine and cheese social that will take place Jan. 22.

"We're bringing in a couple vendors that will have wine and beer tastings, plus we'll have live entertainment, a teacup auction and door prizes, all from donated goods," he said.

Turnout for this event typically is between 135 to 150 people.

"It's a nice night out for people, especially at the end of January," Mary Wood said.

Both of these fundraisers, along with any other events the group may host, have all of their net proceeds going directly to the library to support programming, museum passes and even some inventory.

"Anything over and beyond the basics, we cover," Brian explained. "About 95 percent of the programs are sponsored by the Friends."

Assistant Director Karen Benner, left, and Library Director Lisa Masten collect tickets at the door and greet shoppers as they enter the book sale. All of the money earned from the sale goes back into helping the library.

"I think the biggest impact they have is from all the fund raising they do," Library Director Lisa Masten said. "Most of the programming we do is provided by the Friends and we wouldn't be able to have all of that without them."

The largest programs that the Friends sponsor are the annual summer and winter reading programs, but they also host smaller events such as movie nights and lectures.

Just last year, Mary Wood hosted a Shakespeare series that involved four different films and historical information.

The Friends are bringing in

The twice-yearly book sale is the largest fundraiser for the Friends of the Lucy Robbins Welles Library. Donations come in throughout the year and are sold at the Newington Senior and Disabled Center, across the street from the library.

Central Connecticut State University professor Gil Gigliotti for a three-film series on Frank Sinatra in the 1940s, '50s and '60s.

In addition to in-house programming, the Friends also sponsor the library's museum pass program that allows residents to obtain entrance to various museums in the state for a free or reduced price. It also sponsors bus trips to such places as New York City.

Masten said she is greatly appreciative of the fund-raising efforts of the Friends and equally grateful for their advocacy work.

"They always advocate for the library and are always willing to go out and speak on our behalf," she said. "We're very appreciative of that. It's a hard-working group of people and they're very dedicated to what they're doing."

Brian Wood said it is because of the commitment of so many Friends members that the organization is able to continue providing support for the library.

"The amount of work of the volunteers to put on the fund-raising efforts that we hold is outstanding," he said. "It really takes quite a bit of effort."

Despite the great deal of time that the totally volunteer organization gives, those involved love doing it.

"It's a very worthwhile organization and we do have fun," he said. "We're happy to be able to give back to the library in this way." NL

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Patriotic connection

Sons of the American Revolution help keep early U.S. history alive

by Mark Jahne
Editor

They believe in patriotism and remembering the long-ago contributions of the men and women who founded this country. They call themselves the Sons of the American Revolution.

The Col. Jeremiah Wadsworth Branch #7 of that national organization recently met at Lucky Lou's Bar and Grill in Old Wethersfield. Members come primarily from central Connecticut.

On this particular day their guest speaker was Amy Northrop Wittorff, executive director of the Wethersfield Historical Society. She spoke on a number of topics related to the American Revolution and Connecticut's famous Nathan Hale.

"We try to stick to historic venues" for meetings, Chris Nichols said.

He is president of the local branch. Nichols said the group gives out awards, assists Eagle Scouts and also contributes money to restore historic plaques.

On this day they presented an Exemplary Patriotism Award to Wethersfield Town Councilor Michael Rell in recognition of his ongoing commitment to flying the American flag outside his home on the Broad Street Green.

"Our members are predominantly interested in history," Nichols said. "We have a color guard. We call them a living history museum."

"Our members are predominantly interested in history. We have a color guard. We call them a living history museum."

– Chris Nichols

Hale's last know letter is in the archives of the SAR, she said.

Every meeting ends with the members recalling the importance of the men who created the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, an independent Supreme Court and a land where all people can live in freedom.

Eric Hart of Wethersfield joined the organization this past year. He can trace his ancestry to those early patriots.

"I've been into genealogy for a long time. I've been engrained in history for a long time," he said. "I like what they do. It's a really good organization."

Dave Goodale of Newington is another member. Goodale Drive in town is named after his great uncle.

"I just enjoy history. I'm president of the Deming-Young Farm Foundation," he said.

He added that family history is also important to him. Goodale particularly enjoys studying the history of the American Revolution and World War II.

The National Society, Sons of the American Revolution, was organized April 30, 1889, the 100th anniversary of the inauguration of George Washington as the country's first president. National headquarters are in Louisville, Kentucky. It was preceded by an organization founded in California called the Sons of Revolutionary Sires.

The SAR was conceived as a fraternal and civic society composed of lineal descendants of the men who wintered at Valley Forge, signed the Declaration of Independence, fought in the battles of the American Revolution, served in the Continental Congress, or otherwise supported the cause of American independence.

The national society was chartered by an act of Congress on June 9, 1906. That charter was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt, who was a member of the SAR.

The SAR is considered a lineage society. Membership is restricted to those who can trace their family tree back to a point of having an ancestor who supported the cause of American independence during the years 1774 to 1783. **NL**

courtesy photo

Wethersfield resident Eric Hart, left, congratulates fellow resident and Town Councilor Michael Rell for receiving an award from the Col. Jeremiah Wadsworth Branch #7, Sons of the American Revolution. Hart is an SAR member.

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Police Officer Tom Buggee uses a laptop computer, standard equipment in all patrol cars, to check motor vehicle records, criminal status and more.

photos by Mark Jahne

Holiday season threat

Police are on alert to remove intoxicated drivers from the road

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The holiday season has arrived, with family gatherings, office parties and all that goes with the celebration of Christmas and the new year. It is a joyous time, but it's also a time when statistics show an increase in drunk driving.

Newington police don't want anyone to be hurt or killed by an intoxicated motorist at any time of

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the year. They are paying extra attention to the problem now because of that seasonal increase.

Officer Tim Buggee is a nearly 10-year veteran of the force. He is highly trained in spotting and apprehending people who may be driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

He considers such people to be incredibly selfish because they knowingly engage in a behavior that puts others at great risk but do it anyhow. That doesn't sit well with him and his fellow officers.

It was the night before Thanksgiving and he was assigned the 4 p.m. to midnight shift. An extra patrol unit was on the road this evening and everyone knew that it was important to be vigilant for impaired drivers because of the high volume of traffic on the Berlin Turnpike, Cedar Street and other busy roads.

Buggee said driving while intoxicated (DWI) can happen on any day and at any time. But he also knows that the risk increases on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings when people are out having a good time. It increases even more during the winter holidays.

He said as many as 10 percent of all drivers on the road these evenings may be impaired by alcoholic beverages. That turns their vehicles into unguided missiles that can kill and maim.

"There's some nights on the midnight shift where each guy will get a DWI arrest."

– Officer Tim Buggee

"I had one last night at 5:30. He was pulling out of a package store and hit an 18-wheeler," Buggee said.

The driver left the scene and went home. Police had no trouble finding him because among the debris left behind at the crash scene was his license plate.

"With DWI, we're taught to detect certain types of operation," he said.

These indicators suggest that the person behind the wheel may not be in full control of his or her faculties and able to operate a car or truck in a safe manner.

According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, those indicators include:

- weaving or zig-zagging
- tailgating
- quick acceleration or deceleration
- driving anywhere other than on the road
- almost striking an object, curb or other vehicle
- straddling the center line
- erratic braking or stopping without cause
- drifting in and out of lanes
- inconsistent signaling
- remaining stopped after the light turns green
- driving at night with headlights off
- swerving
- driving more than 10 miles per hour below the posted speed limit
- abrupt or illegal turns
- driving into opposing traffic

These are all legitimate causes for police to stop someone and interact with them to determine if there are grounds for enforcement. According to data from the federal Centers for Disease Control, on average, more than 100 Connecticut resident die every year in crashes caused by drinking and driving.

Buggee patrolled the Berlin Turnpike, watching how people drove and running license plates through the laptop computer in his patrol car. He came upon a disabled car in the northbound lanes of the turnpike near the busy intersection

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It was a perilous place for anyone to be stranded with a broken car. He parked behind so that he could turn on his flashing lights and provide some protection to the female motorist.

At least one minor car crash occurred just behind him because of this obstacle. A tow truck was summoned and arrived some 20 minutes later. To the surprise of Buggee and the tow driver, the woman was somehow able to start her car and drive away.

He resumed his patrol and spoke further about drunk driving.

"There's some nights on the midnight shift where each guy will get a DWI arrest," he said. "The midnight guys, every one of them is going to get a DWI tonight."

He always looks for legitimate reasons to pull people over because those kinds of seemingly small interactions can have a greater affect. Stopping someone for an expired registration or broken headlight, he said, has often led to drunk driving or drug arrests.

Sometimes they find a wanted felon or stolen car that way. It's a proactive approach to policing that he said permeates the department and makes this a safer town.

"A motor vehicle violation is a gateway to other things," he said.

When Buggee stops someone for suspicion of driving under the influence he engages them in conversation and looks for certain clues that the person may be impaired.

Do they answer his questions clearly? Can he smell an alcoholic beverage on their breath? Do they hand him a credit card or the wrong piece of paper instead of their license and registration?

If the suspicion persists, he will ask them to exit their car and administer a field sobriety test. This includes standing on one foot and walking heel to toe.

While this is taking place he takes note of how well they follow his instructions. The idea is to make them deal with more than one thing at a time, things most people can easily do when sober.

"The science behind DWI is people cannot do more than one thing at a time," he said.

One of the most dependable and fool-proof tests is horizontal gaze nystagmus. The officer slowly moves a pen back and forth and instructs the suspect to follow it with his eyes, but not to move his head. If there is alcohol in the person's body, this triggers a reflex action in which the eyes bounce involuntarily.

"The eyes are the real indicator," he said.

Failing the field test means being transported in handcuffs to the police station for further testing. Breath analysis is the most common test for alcohol, while a urine test is most frequently utilized if police suspect the incident involves drugs.

Connecticut law states that any motorist with a blood alcohol level of 0.08 percent is legally intoxicated. The legal level for young motorists who have not yet reached the legal drinking age of 21 is 0.02 percent; this allows for trace elements of alcohol that may appear in medications, such as cough syrup.

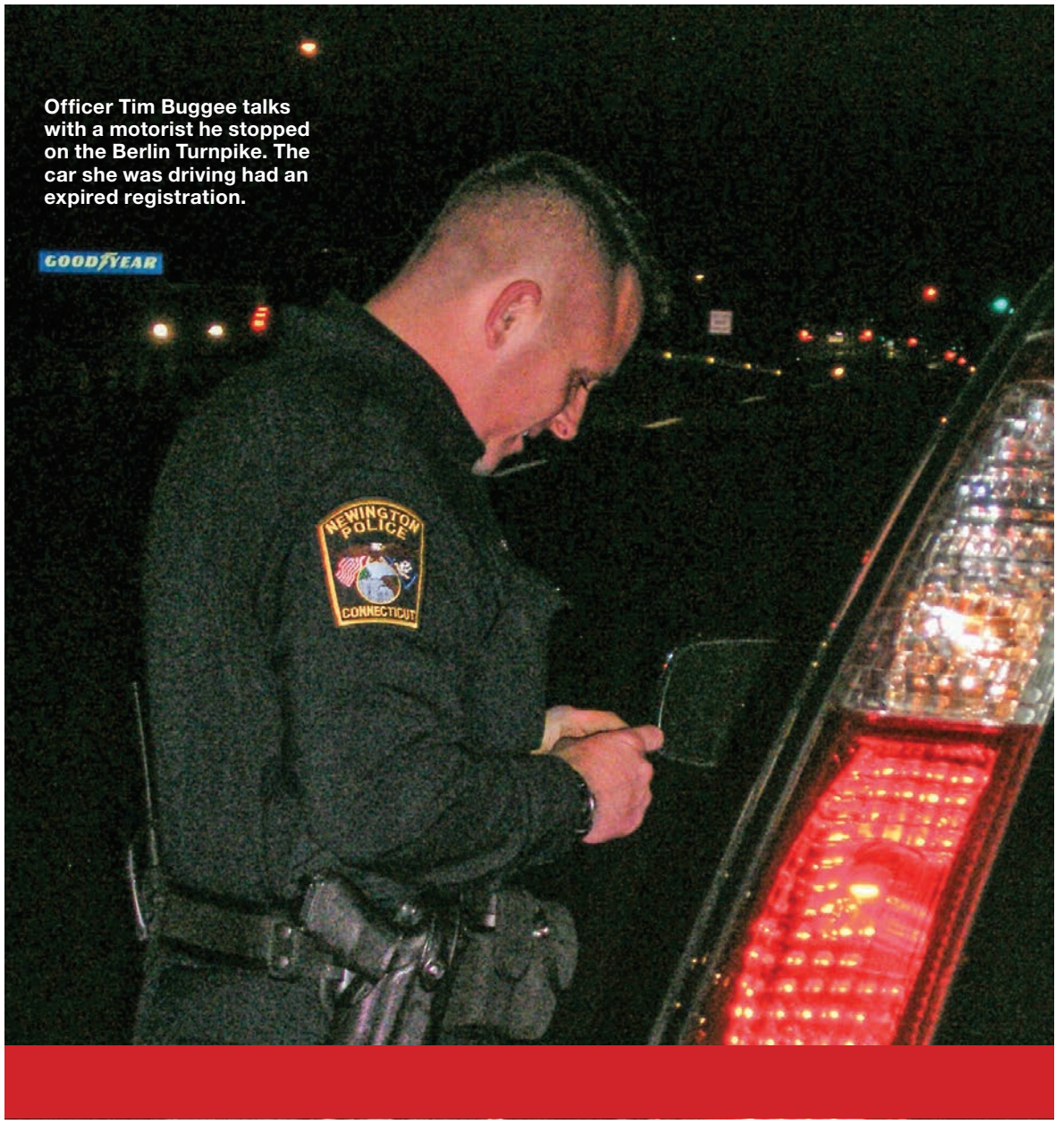
A drunk or drugged driving arrest requires a court appearance. The nature of punishment is contingent upon numerous factors including the details of the arrest and whether the person is a multiple offender. The latter can face jail time if convicted.

Buggee recalled a recent DWI arrest he made. An intoxicated woman plowed into three other cars. When he walked up to the window of her vehicle she asked him why the road was closed and how long it would be before the way was clear.

She was not injured. He said it is often the case that the impaired driver is not hurt, but other people are.

The testing and booking requirements of a DUI arrest take the officer off the street for at least 45 minutes, often longer, he said. Suspects have the option to refuse to take the breath or urine test, but failure to comply results in an immediate suspension of their driver's license.

It's 5:50 p.m. and Buggee was at a traffic light near the Berlin town line waiting to make a left turn and head back up the



Officer Tim Buggee talks with a motorist he stopped on the Berlin Turnpike. The car she was driving had an expired registration.

turnpike. He ran the plate of the car in front of him and it came back as unregistered, so he flipped on his lights and stopped the driver.

The expiration date was only a few days off and the driver was polite and respectful. He treated her the same way in return. Buggee believes it is important that police officers show people respect and professionalism in all interactions.

That helps defuse problems and shows the public that the police are not the enemy. High-profile cases of alleged police violence or poor behavior are getting a great deal of attention in the news and on social media.

"We are protecting and serving," he said. "Particularly right now, it's a very difficult climate for us out here. We can't be everywhere, but we try our best."

Buggee recalled a letter he recently received from a woman he arrested several years ago on drug charges. She thanked him for helping her realize that she needed to clean up her life and she eventually became a successful professional and family person.

He has seen his share of massive injuries and deaths caused by drunk drivers. What amazes him is that the people he arrests don't understand the problem they cause when they drive impaired or the risk they present to others.

They're just thinking about how to deal with the arrest and consider their behavior harmless as long as no one was hurt. He gets just as frustrated with people who engage in distracted driving with cell phones.

He remembered being dispatched to a car crash at the foot of Cedar Mountain. The vehicles were badly mangled and people were injured; one of them, a passenger in the offending driver's vehicle, is now paralyzed from the neck down.

"Oddly enough, this driver was not drinking. The driver was texting," Buggee said.

Police determined that the speed of the car at the time of impact was 80 miles per hour.

Another challenge is the effect alcohol or drugs may have on the person police have stopped. The suspect may be calm one moment and then quickly become combative or argumentative. That's true of both men and women.

"Intoxicated people are very unpredictable. They will fight," he said.

He encourages the public to call police to report suspicious activity or impaired drivers. A DWI stop was made by another officer just before the start of his shift, thanks to just such a call. **NL**

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A Highway Department crew removes leaves along Wells Drive near the center of town. The annual leaf collection program vacuums up 1,400 cubic yards of fallen foliage.

photo by Mark Jahne

Those darn leaves

Town crews scour the streets to remove tons of fallen foliage

by Mark Jahne
Editor

If a leaf falls in town, does it make a noise? Probably not. But someone will most certainly speak up if it isn't vacuumed and carted away in a timely manner.

Town crews recently wrapped up the annual leaf collection program, a weather-dependent and labor-intensive venture that removes all of the leaves residents rake or blow to the edge of the street. October's stunning beauty become November's annoying mess and that's when they swing into action.

"We're having a fairly successful leaf season so far. The weather has been cooperative," Tom Molloy said.

He is the town's highway superintendent. Speaking just before Thanksgiving, he was hopeful that good weather would continue, allowing the crews to finish their task before the first snow fell.

They hit the roads on Nov. 2 as soon as enough leaves had dropped and been raked to the curb. The last foliage was removed during the first week of December.

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Rain slows down or even cancels a daily collection. Snow creates a nightmare because the leaves get soaking wet, freeze and then turn into a substance resembling giant lumps of oatmeal. That's makes it difficult for the vacuum trucks to suck them up.

"It's not pretty when they get frozen and full of snow. That's something we hope to avoid," Molloy said. "They become big blocks that need to be broken up. The ideal leaf-picking conditions are warm and dry."

When it snows, the trucks have to be called in off the road and changed from leaf-collecting vehicles into plows. Blades must be mounted on the front and chemical salt loaded in the back. Plowing operations tend to push all of those neatly arranged piles of leaves all over the place but that cannot be avoided if the streets are to be cleared for traffic.

Molloy said his crews cover 120 miles of local streets, making two passes down each as more leaves tumble to the ground. He has four crews at his disposal and each crew consists of two drivers, a tube operator, a foreman and two others with rakes.

That's a total of 24 people dedicated to the task of sucking up the leaves. Town employees are taken from both the highways and parks and grounds to accomplish this task. He also brings on eight additional seasonal employees.

"We find that it's best to split the town in half by Willard Avenue," he said.

"It's not pretty when they get frozen and full of snow. That's something we hope to avoid."
– Tom Molloy

Two crews work the streets east of Willard and the other pair restrict their efforts to streets west of that major thoroughfare. Molloy said the success of each year's collection, in large part, depends upon residents moving the leaves to the curb as soon as they fall.

"They most important thing is to get them out as soon as you can, and we'll come. Our guys work very, very hard. For the residents, I think it's a great service," Molloy said.

"I can't say enough about our guys. ... they take pride in their work."

He estimated that the town collects 1,400 cubic yards of leaves each fall. They are temporarily stored at the town landfill and then trucked away. The plan in the future is to compost some of them for use in town parks and properties. He'd like to sell them but there is no market for leaves.

"We are in the process of converting our landfill into a transfer station," he said.

That will enable the town to add a composting component to the site.

When leaf season arrives, town crews know that that they are in for four or more weeks of long days. They hit the road at 7 a.m. six days a week and stay out there until 5 p.m.

It's not only hard on them, it's hard on their equipment.

"Every day, there's maintenance on the machines," Molloy said.

They keep a spare machine on hand for those times when one of the other four is broken or needs additional maintenance. He pointed out that these are vacuum machines, not wood chippers, and foreign objects such as rocks and small limbs can damage the tube and the impeller that creates the suction.

"If we lose a machine, we're down 25 percent," he said.

Crews continue to work during light rain but a heavier storm makes the leaves saturated with water and they are too difficult to vacuum until the storm ends and they have a chance to drain. Wet leaves also have a tendency to form clumps and block up the tubes. **NL**

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OnFire Grill promises a different kind of dining experience

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

OnFire Grill, a new restaurant offering Americana food with an international twist, is now in operation along the Berlin Turnpike, near its intersection with East Cedar Street.

Photos by Allie Rivera

At OnFire Grill, everything is fresh, from the meats and vegetables to the ownership and management.

"We're different, we're new," General Manager Aaron Kirby said. "We want to make sure we aren't just another name on the billboard."

Located in the former Tunxis Grill on the Berlin Turnpike, Arsen Grigorian and his silent partner took over the restaurant in late June and held a soft opening Oct. 21. OnFire Grill is now welcoming customers and Kirby hopes that residents will give them a try.

"It's new management and we're going to try to make it successful," Grigorian said.

OnFire Grill is the second restaurant that he has owned, but the first where he is fully invested in the day-to-day operations. With this new endeavor, he was looking to make big changes.

"We changed the old menu," he said. "Everything is new."

According to Kirby, the style of the new restaurant is meant to be a family friendly place for grilled cuisine and other menu items.

"We are a family owned restaurant with Americana food with an international twist," he said. "I want that grill to be the main focus. We want to have that comfort food, but with our own twist.

Although they are primarily a grilling restaurant, Kirby said that OnFire Grill also offers a variety of fish, chicken and even meatloaf.

"We call it the Not Your Mother's Meatloaf," he said. "I have to say, I was the first one to say nuh-uh, not

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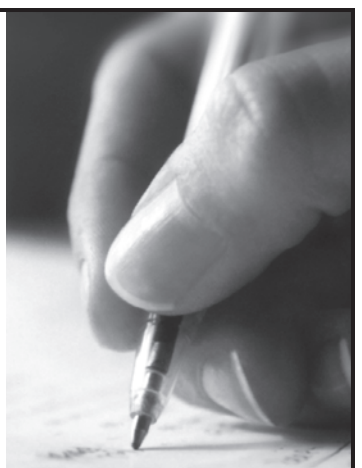

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Justin Flynn and Nikki Singletary are two of the faces that will greet customers from behind the bar at OnFire Grill.

"We are a family owned restaurant with Americana food with an international twist."

– Aaron Kirby

on the menu, but it's become one of our best sellers because it's not just meatloaf."

He added that the restaurant's commitment to fresh food is also a draw.

"We are a from-scratch Americana restaurant," Kirby said. "We get the meat whole and our chef cuts it himself. Even the dough we make here."

Along with being able to provide what they consider a fresher and therefore better dining experience, Kirby said freshly made food also benefits customers who want to make changes to their meals.

"We don't cook ahead of time. We aren't just heating something up," he said. "We never say no to a guest, and if somebody asks for something special, 99 percent of the time, we can do it."

During the day, Kirby and the others at OnFire Grill hope to become a go-to lunch place for area businesses. They've devised what they call the Fast and Tasty Menu, a selection of fresh lunch specials that can be prepared in minutes to eat in the restaurant or take out.

"Instead of going to McDonald's, it's a little bit healthier and it's just about the same amount of time," Kirby said. "We can be an affordable choice for those people."

In the evenings, he and his staff hope to offer a variety of activities and specials to draw people in. The restaurant has televisions with DirecTV to air football games throughout the week and it offers reduced-price specials on drinks and appetizers during games.

It also offers Happy Hour specials Monday through Friday from 3-6 p.m.

OnFire Grill hosts other activities throughout the week, such as live music on Friday and Saturday evenings, trivia night on Wednesdays and a DJ playing music Saturday nights starting at 11 p.m. Monday karaoke is coming soon.

"We're trying to put something in place for most days," Kirby said.

The manager hopes that by offering a wide variety of entertainment, residents will feel more inclined to dine local.

"We want to become the place that people would go to in Hartford or West Hartford Center, but here in Newington," he said. "Why drive to West Hartford when OnFire Grill is right here?"

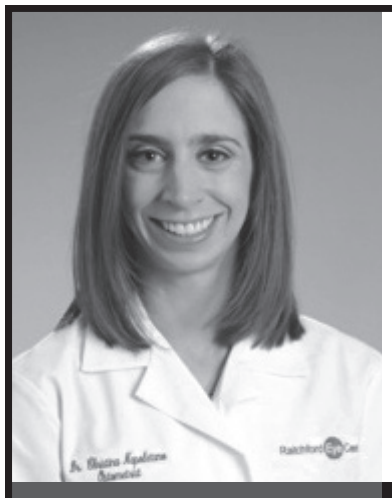
Staying local is important to both he and Grigorian, who lives in Wethersfield. Along with booking local talent to play live in the restaurant, OnFire Grill utilizes local resources to keep the business running.

"We get our soda from Soda Services of Newington and our coffee from Saccuzzo in town," Kirby said. "We really are a small, family owned restaurant."

To help cement their place in town, Kirby and Grigorian are also reaching out to the Newington Chamber of Commerce to find more ways to become involved in the community, as well as sponsoring local basketball and hockey teams.

"We really try to be as local as possible," Kirby said. "Please give us a chance. We'll make sure that you're taken care of and you'll leave happy and wanting to come back." **NL**

OnFire Grill is located at 2095 Berlin Turnpike. It can be reached at 860-594-8525 or online at onfiregrill.com.



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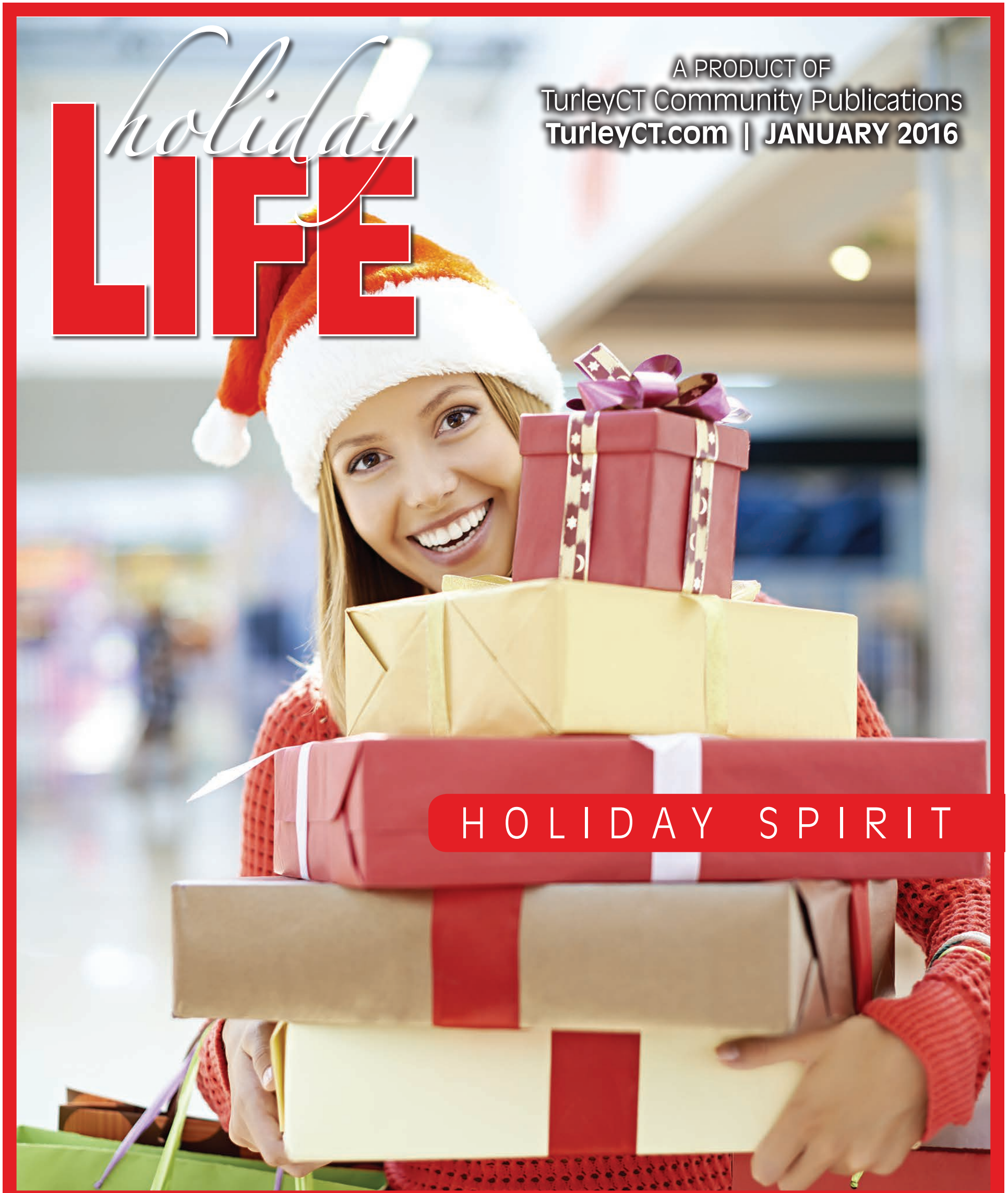

HOLIDAY SPIRIT

Holidays made easy

How to maintain a festive spirit throughout the season

by Alison Jalbert and Nancy Thompson
LIFE staff

The holiday season is filled with festive imagery – sparkling snow, presents wrapped with beautiful bows, a twinkling Christmas tree adorned with ornaments and family gathered around a crackling fire sipping cocoa.

Whether or not that imagery is true to life is questionable, as the holidays often incite stress as everyone tries to attempt that ideal depicted in commercials and movies. Banish stress and chaos to the naughty list this year with tips from area experts on how to make the holidays more relaxing and enjoyable.

Stuff the stockings with care

What's not to like about an oversized stocking full of goodies? Emmy Lou DeBari, owner of Emmy Lou's Ltd. in Glastonbury, offered some ideas of stocking stuffers for anyone on your gift list.

Personal care items, such as hand creams made

in New England and body wash and lotions, are available in small sizes that fit nicely in stockings and meet airport security requirements. Soy candles can add a delightful scent to a home and are available in several varieties, including coconut-lime, pure lavender and vanilla.

Small bottles of hand lotion in almond-pear and pomegranate scents will have hands feeling and smelling like they've been to the manicurist, and French-milled heart-shaped soaps will turn any bath or shower into a spa.

Handy gadgets are popular as well. Small light-up pillboxes are great for use in restaurants, theaters and other places with dim lighting, and a wrist key-keeper combines the look of a bracelet with the utility of never again having to search for those keys. Armored wallets are small enough to fit easily into a purse or pocket, hold cards and cash, and protect cards from radio frequency identity theft. One of DeBari's favorite items is an LED flashlight that's flat and fits anywhere.

Ornaments geared to a specific interest, such as bicycling, snowmobiling or sports, or an event such as a first Christmas, not only decorate a family tree, but also turn into treasured keepsakes. Holiday-themed socks in red and green with Santa, mistletoe and other designs are another option.

Not all stocking stuffers need to come from a store. DeBari also suggested adding homemade cookies or fudge to a stocking for a personal touch.

Surviving holiday stress

Stress is often synonymous with the holidays, but Dr. Laura Saunders, a psychologist at Hartford Hospital's Institute of Living, said the first step is to set reasonable expectations for oneself.

"Oftentimes, stress is caused by the fact that our goals are too high or our expectations are unreasonable," she explained. "Therefore, we feel like we fall short of those expectations. Be kind to oneself and be reasonable."

It is also important to remember that families are often flawed.

"A lot of individuals don't have picture-perfect families," Saunders said. "It's OK to have families that have issues. Facebook and the media are overcompensation. Don't feel bad about your family dynamic."

When it comes to gift giving, the emphasis should be on quality, not quantity.

She said the greatest gift a person can give their children or nieces and nephews is an experience.

"Time and attention can be the greatest gift; it doesn't have to be the most expensive one."

Saunders said parents need to remember that bringing them to many different parties throws them off their daily routine. Keeping them on regular bedtime schedules and being careful about sugar intake will make things less stressful for everyone involved.

Too many parties and other social obligations can also be detrimental to adults; Saunders said they can have a negative impact on a person's ability to function at work and with their family.

"Be gentle with oneself and make sure you're not overreaching," she said.

Quick ways to make your home feel festive

It's easy to spend a lot of time and money on holiday decorations. For simple and affordable ways to make a home festive, Farah Assi Evenson, owner of Interiors by Farah in Wethersfield, offered several quick and easy ideas.

First, the wreath.

"Who can say holidays without saying wreath?" Evenson said. "A lot of people associate a wreath with fall and winter, but it actually can be used any time of the year. If you start with a basic wreath you can

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Holiday LIFE

embellish it depending on the season.

For example, dress it up with pinecones, berries and ornaments for Christmas, or flowers or seashells for summer. Wreaths not only look good on the outside of your house, but will also look great hanging inside.

Next is the centerpiece, another decorative item that can be changed and used all year.

"For an attractive centerpiece, gather different size jars along with vases and fill them with faux greenery and berries in the winter," she said. "Just like a wreath, they complement any holiday decor. Depending on the season, you can fill them with many different things. I like to fill mine with lemons or seashells in the summer."

How about those pillows?

"One of my favorite easy ways to add holiday flair is to change all the throw pillows in my house," Evenson said. "Whether it's the pillows on the living room couch or the pillows in the guest bedroom, it always makes the house look more festive. Throw pillows can go a long way and can be interchanged depending on the season. I have a few bags of them in my attic labeled for each holiday – deep reds and greens for December, blues and soft white for summer.

And finally, for coziness and warmth, how about cinnamon?

"Holidays are also the time to feel cozy and warm," she said. "Nothing does that better than the smell of cinnamon. Fill vases with scented pinecones and place them around the house. They don't have to be visible, but their scent alone will fill the house with a welcoming holiday feel."

Wrap it up

Gift wrapping seems so simple; cover a geometrically shaped present in eye-catching wrapping paper, tie a brightly colored ribbon around it and make a jaunty bow. Easy, right? Maybe, if you're MarthaStewart. Corners end up lumpy, bows lie limp and the whole presentation looks ... off. Alison Swayne, sales associate at The Silver Dahlia in Simsbury, which also has locations in West Hartford and Glastonbury, said time is necessary.

"Realizing it will take time [is important]. Making a gift look nice is part of gift giving. It's worth it," she said.

To expedite the process, she said pre-cut paper could be helpful if many gifts are the same size, and stick-on bows can look just as pretty as handcrafted bows, with much less effort.

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as it's easier to wrap with good paper as opposed to a flimsier option, according to Deb Clark, key holder at Gift-ology in Blue Back Square in West Hartford.

Leon Davidoff, co-owner of The Paper Station in Newington, said there is a secret to successful wrapping. When wrapping a package – he used a shirt box as an example – all edges of the paper need to make a crease at the edge of the box.

"That will hold it there," he explained. "When you go to do the sides, do the same thing on every single side."

For those who are truly gift wrap averse, there are gift bags available in many sizes and designs.

Jillian Skau, an associate at SPIN Monograms & Gifts in West Hartford, said gift bags are easy and reusable.

Davidoff also has a secret to proper tissue paper placement in gift bags. Taking the piece, pull down from the center, like you are making a bouquet. Doing this with two or three sheets of tissue paper will get "that poof look."

"Everyone always enjoys a properly festive gift bag," he said. **NL**

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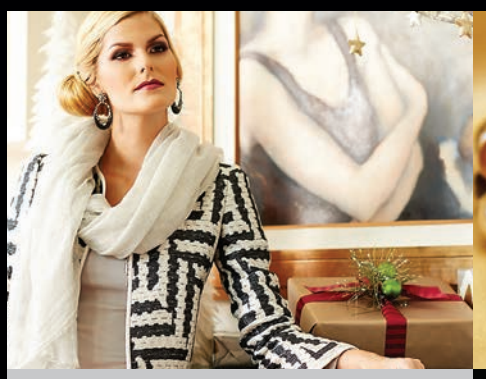

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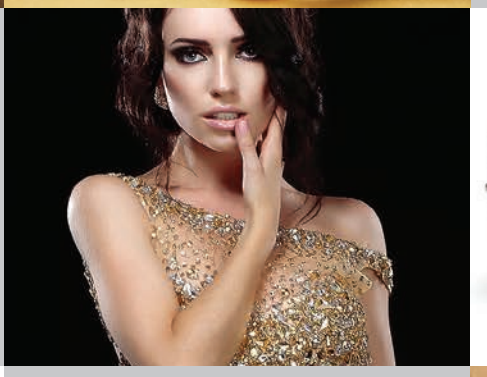

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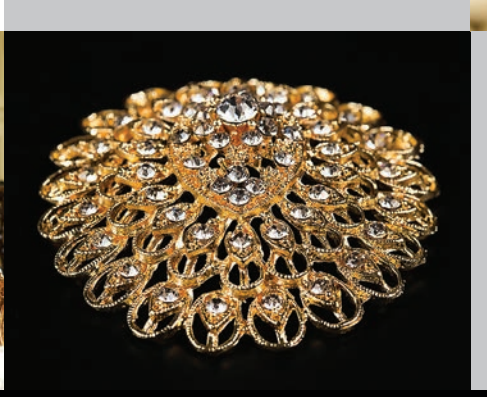

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From the heart

There is still time to make your own holiday gifts

by Sloan Brewster and Alicia B. Smith
LIFE staff

When getting ready to hang stockings by the chimney with care this year, why not make your own stockings?

Homemade gifts do not have to be intimidating and are a unique way to show friends and family how much you care.

Marion Carling, owner of Village Wool in Glastonbury, assured there was plenty of time to make a knitted or crocheted gift.

This year, many of her customers are coming in to make infinity scarves, towels and fingerless mittens, while a few are sticking with traditional mittens.

"There are things out there that are very simple," Carling said.

For those who have never knitted before or perhaps it's been awhile, Carling said knitting is a skill that needs to be learned.

"It's not something that you can automatically pick up," she said.

Her shop does offer a weekly drop-in knitting session Thursday evenings where newbies may be able to learn some tips and get started.

For those whose needle skills may be rusty, there are simple projects, like the aforementioned infinity scarves or a regular scarf, which Carling said is basically a long rectangle.

Holiday LIFE

Above, left: A handmade gift by Grace Epstein. She made catnip pillows with catnip that grows on the The Ethel Walker School campus. Above, right: Kemi Oluwakemi Richards, a student at Ethel Walker School in Simsbury, places her hands beside a hat she knitted as a gift. Far left: Grace Epstein of Simsbury creates ceramic mugs for holiday gifts; Left: Epstein also makes jam, including strawberry rhubarb and blueberry, and gives it away as gifts for the holidays.

"People who are not knitters can pick up projects like that," she said.

Carling has several customers who get busy this time of year because they are making homemade knitted gifts for their loved ones. She said hats and even Christmas stockings are popular gifts.

"I really think it's more personal," she said of the homemade option. "It just shows more thoughtfulness; you are thinking about what someone would want. Also, it's enjoyable to make. Usually, people do it because they enjoy knitting

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Holiday LIFE

and crocheting. For them, it's a sort of creative expression, and they are able to make a nice gift for someone."

For those interested in knitting one, purling twice, but are not sure of what to make, Carling stocks several magazines in her shop that are specifically for gift making.

The Claypen in West Hartford is another great alternative for making a unique gift for a friend this holiday season. The walk-in studio carries a wide selection of gift ideas that can easily be personalized – coffee mugs, picture frames, platters and more – that guests can choose and paint for themselves.

There is no need to worry about whether or not artistic skills are in abundance; the staff can help and they also offer a number of stencils and tape for straight lines to assist those who are less confident about free styling with a paintbrush.

In addition, patrons can try their hand at glass fusion, another creative option, where guests begin with a glass base, arrange colorful glass on top of the piece before it's put in the kiln to fuse, and later it returns to the kiln to be shaped into a bowl or any number of other items.

"This time of year is our busiest," Stephanie Yearsley, store manager, said. "People want to come in and create something useful for someone."

A popular gift item at the studio is taking handprints or footprints of children to be given as a gift for grandparents.

Yearsley said at least half of the studio customers come in to make an item for someone else.

"That is more tangible. You have

Something as simple as framing photos in handmade frames or scrapbooking memories of family and friends can be a big way to show how much you love someone this holiday season.

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Holiday LIFE

to use your imagination," she said of painting an item. "We love so much being a part of people's memories and gift giving, it's true. We see people come in and really put themselves into it. It's personal. They are keepsakes; they are memories."

Christmas does not take a break for many customers of Thistle Needleworks in Wethersfield.

Owner Judi Solomon said many of her customers are in gift making mode all year long.

"There is satisfaction in putting a little love into everything you are doing – you are thinking about that person as you are making it," she said.

The shop offers a number of classes, and one of her students told her she was making a gift for her pending great-grandchild and said the project was something she could do from her hands and heart.

Customers can find kits to help them on a complete project or all the materials needed to create their own.

Among the gift items to select from are wall hangings, pillows, ornaments, Christmas stockings, bracelets and cuffs, purses and wallets, boxes, trays and mirrors.

"To me, boxes are both functional and decorative. They are always a nice item to make," Solomon said.

She has been doing needlework since she was a child and assured that anyone can pick it up or take a refresher class.

Lilah Kelly, a student at Simsbury's The Ethel Walker School and a resident of Rocky Hill, prefers to make gifts.

"I don't really like buying things," she said. "I feel like I put more of myself into it when I make them. I know that sounds really cheesy, but it feels like it's more from me than from a store."

"We love so much being a part of people's memories and gift giving, it's true. We see people come in and really put themselves into it. It's personal.

–Stephanie Yearsley of The Claypen

This year, she is embarking on a new project she discovered on Pinterest for her parents' gift.

"I'm making sort of like a folded book sculpture. The word 'joy' is being folded into it," she said.

With each calculated fold, she will transform the pages inside the book until the folded pages form the word.

As of Nov. 1, the endeavor, which was doubling as an art project, was not yet completed and was taking a little longer than Kelly anticipated. At that point, she had been working on it for about two months in art class and devoting about an hour to it each weekend.

Gift making projects she has completed in the past include pot-holders, friendship bracelets, sewn pillows and Christmas ornaments.

Grace Epstein, a Simsbury resident, art teacher at Ethel Walker and Canton Art League member, is also big on making gifts.

"Generally, what I have done is whatever I like making becomes a present," she said.

She especially enjoys showing up at the holidays with a basket of unwrapped handmade treasures and telling family members to choose what they like.

"It usually is something kind of fanciful," she said. "It gives them the opportunity to pick what they want."

While some of her projects are artsy, such as sculpting ceramic mugs and firing them up in her kiln or one at the school, she has also made simpler creations.

She's done knitting, making hats and such, and likes making catnip pillows, using catnip, which grows all over campus.

"It's just a simple little thing," she said. "It's a good product."

She cuts fabric into small squares and sews them together, leaving one side open. She then stuffs them with the dried herb. Other herbs, such as lavender or rosemary, would also work.

Epstein also makes jams and loves blueberry jam, she said. The simplest way to make it is to buy frozen fruit, though fresh works, too. Prepare the fruit, getting rid of the stems and seeds if using fresh, and cook it up with pectin and sugar.

Epstein buys Pomona's Universal Pectin and said pectin comes with instructions on how to make jams.

The cooking process only takes about 10 minutes and then, after the jam is sealed in jars, which can be found online, at hardware stores or Walmart, it's placed in boiling water for 10 more minutes, she said. Cool the jam and use it within a year; one batch makes about 10 four-ounce jars.

Avoiding the stress of stores during the holidays, making home-made gifts are an option for people of all levels of craftiness and shows an extra amount of care for the gifts' recipients. **NL**

Village Wool is located at 2279 Main St., Glastonbury. For more information, call 860-633-0898. The Claypen is at 997 Farmington Ave., West Hartford. For more information, call 860-233-3322 or visit www.the-claypen.com. Thistle Needleworks can be found at 506 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield. For more information, call 860-257-2718 or visit www.thistle-needleworks.com.

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Ideas for items to leave under the tree

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For her

Looking for a special gift for that special woman in your life? Items available at Westfarms include an 18k rose gold bow cuff at Tiffany & Co. for $7,500, COACH shearling wristlets available for $65 at Macy's, a $228 Cowled Cashmere Tunic at Anthropologie and a Limited Edition Costello Hydration Essentials Set for $29 at Kiehl's Since 1851.

For him

Gifts available at Westfarms to say "Happy Holidays" to your favorite guy include a Lucky Brand horizontal cable shaw for $149, a Seiko Coutura watch for $495 at Lord & Taylor and the Fitbit Surge for $249 at the AT&T Experience Store.

For the kids

When shopping for the little ones, look no further than Westfarms where you will find Star Wars slippers for $46 and The North Face, Baby Girls Thermoball Bunting for $120 at Macy's and the Xbox One Bundle for $399 at The Mircosoft Store.

Eggnog completes the party

The holiday season is rife with tradition. Families reunite to exchange gifts, enjoy meals together and do a little catching up along the way. But the holiday season also is synonymous with parties. Celebrations are a big part of this month and a main reason why this is such a festive and beloved time of year. As this is a season of celebrating, it's good to remember that no party is truly complete until eggnog has been served. Enjoyed almost exclusively during the holiday season, eggnog is as much a staple of celebrations as stockings hung by the chimney with care. This year, impress your holiday guests with the following recipe for "Excellent Eggnog" from A.J. Rathbun's "Good Spirits" (Harvard Common Press).

Excellent Eggnog

Serves 8
8 large eggs, preferably organic
2 1/4 cups superfine sugar
8 ounces brandy
8 ounces rum
4 ounces bourbon
1 quart milk
Freshly grated nutmeg for garnish

1. Separate the egg yolks from the egg whites, setting the whites aside for a moment.

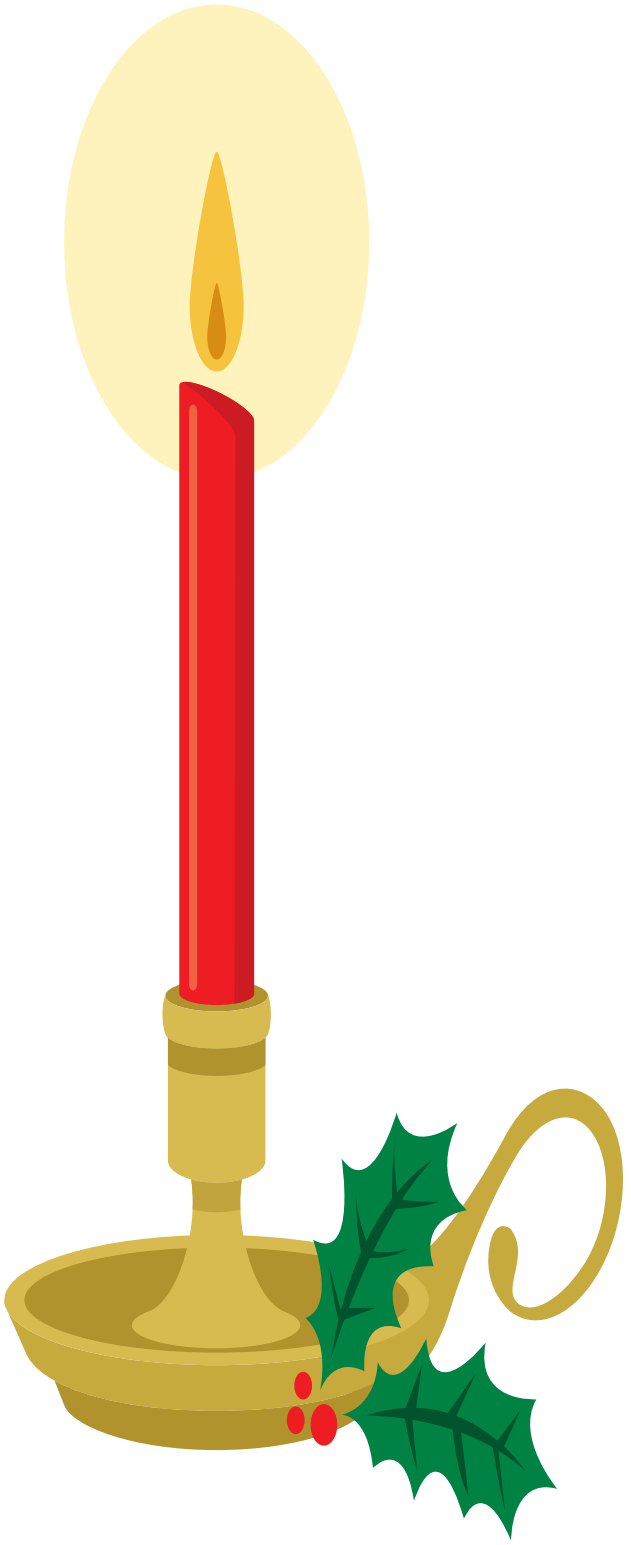
2. In a large mixing bowl, beat the yolks with a hand mixer until completely combined. Add the sugar and beat until it reaches a creamy consistency.

3. Add the brandy, rum and bourbon, then the milk, beating well.

4. In a medium-size mixing bowl, beat the egg whites with a hand mixer until soft peaks form (be sure before beating the whites that you have cleaned and thoroughly dried the beaters).

5. Fold the egg whites into the yolk-sugar-alcohol mixture. Refrigerate the mix until well chilled (at least 3 hours).

6. Stir to recombine as needed. Serve the eggnog in mugs, topping each serving with some nutmeg.



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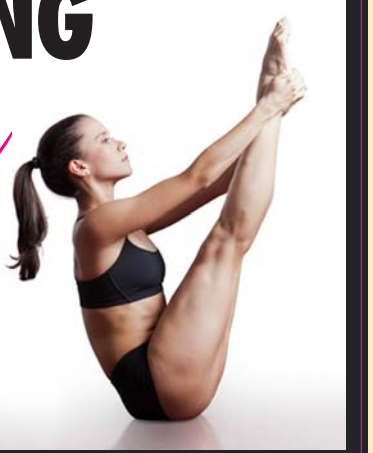

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Events spotlight

Sam Pasco Trio

Dec. 28, 1:30 p.m.
Lucy Robbins Welles Library
95 Cedar St. 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

"The Wonderful World of Music" with the Sam Pasco Trio returns to present its annual Christmas show, sponsored by the Newington Kiwanis Club. Each musician will confide to the children the secret of how he makes music on his instrument. There will be sing-alongs, musical games and musical quizzes. All of the children will get to march in the Small World Parade. Pasco, 88, has been serenading children and shut-ins in hospitals, libraries and nursing homes for more than 50 years. Admission is free to children accompanied by an adult.

Beer, Wine, Cheese and All that Jazz

Jan. 22, 6:30 p.m.
Lucy Robbins Welles Library
95 Cedar St. 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

Join the Friends of the Lucy Robbins Welles Library for the annual wine, cheese and beer social. Tickets are available for $12 in advance at the information desk or may be purchased for $15 at the door. Because alcoholic beverages are being served, attendees must be 21 or older. Enjoy wine and beer tastings conducted and supplied by Connecticut Beverage Mart, along with cheese and refreshments, a tea cup auction, and live jazz arrangements performed by the DeChamplain Trio. This event is an annual fundraiser organized by the Friends and all proceeds will benefit the library.

Kiwanis Hosts Police Chief Stephen Clark

Jan. 25, 7 p.m.
Paradise Pizza
10 East St., New Britain
860-594-4495

Police Chief Stephen Clark will be the guest speaker at the Newington Kiwanis Club's monthly meeting. He is expected to talk of his return to the Newington Police Department, where he originally served for 20 years, leaving in 2006 with the rank of lieutenant to become a captain with the Vernon Police Department. This event is another in the Kiwanis Club's public forum nights. Those who wish to dine are advised to come before the program and order from the regular menu.

People notes

Dakota McMahon was named to the Western New England Preparatory School Field Hockey Association All-Star team. She is a student at Kingswood Oxford School.

Carly McCarthy earned high honors for the first marking period at the University High School of Science and Engineering, an all-honors STEM and Early College Model Magnet School on the University of Hartford campus. Roshini Avula and James Mouthaan earned honors.

Amanda Cefaratti is serving as a student-leader in the Student Government Association at Assumption College.

Stasha Greenalch, a basketball player, was named women's student-athlete of the week at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Kelly Byrnes, majoring in communication/journalism at Western New England University, was selected for inclusion in the 2015-2016 edition of "Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges."

Kelly Shouldice was named to the Honors Program at Elizabethtown College. Shouldice participated in advanced classes within the Honors Program during fall 2015. **NL**

Business notes

Paul Francis was named associate of the quarter at the Newington location of **Panera Bread**.

Hartford HealthCare Senior Services honored Jefferson House employees Yvonne Porter and William Gurekovich for 35 and 30 years of service, respectively. Leadership awards were presented to Kristen Diminno of Jefferson House and Patricia Agosto of Cedar Mountain Commons.

The Travelers Companies, Inc., has doubled its Concierge Claim Nurse locations since the beginning of the year to more than 60 locations nationwide. New Connecticut locations were added in clinics operated by St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center and Bristol Hospital. This patented program helps to facilitate access to care for injured employees and provides personal assistance from a Travelers nurse to guide someone through the worker's compensation process. Nurses were recently added to clinics that are managed by Connecticut Occupational Medicine Partners in Newington and Windsor. The Newington clinic is a partnership between the two hospitals. **NL**

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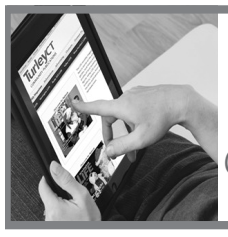

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Meet the calendar girl

Pebbles the pooch graces two dog-themed calendars

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Newington can boast of many things. Now it can add the fact that it has its very own calendar girl.

Her name is Pebbles and she has four paws, fur and a wagging tail. The lively Chihuahua/terrier mix will be featured In the 2016 "3.6.5 Puppies a Year" calendar along with other dogs from all over the world.

Pebbles lives on Groveland Terrace with Daryl and Sandy St. Laurent. They have another dog of the same breed mix named Millie; both were rescues. They found Pebbles at the Connecticut Humane Society.

She is 6 years old now but maintains the energy of a puppy. Her human companions never expected her to achieve this level of fame.

"I bought a calendar because I love dogs," Sandy said.

Then she noticed the application form inside and decided to give it a try.

"I said, what the heck, let me send it, never thinking she would get into the calendar," Sandy added.

"This is her second time," Daryl said as he fed Pebbles a piece of cheese, her favorite treat.

"Pebbles is a watch dog. She watches out the front door," Sandy said.

She barks up a storm if a stranger approaches the house. So does Millie.

Sandy said the calendar girl patrols every nook and cranny of the house each night to make sure everything is safe for her family before settling down to sleep.

The "3.6.5 Puppies a Year" calendar is produced by Workman Publishing of New York City. Pebbles can be found among the other dogs featured for the month of May.

Publicity Assistant Jenny Lee said the company receives thousands of submissions from pet owners who want to get their animal companions into its calendars. **NL**

courtesy photo

This is the official photo of Pebbles used in the calendar.

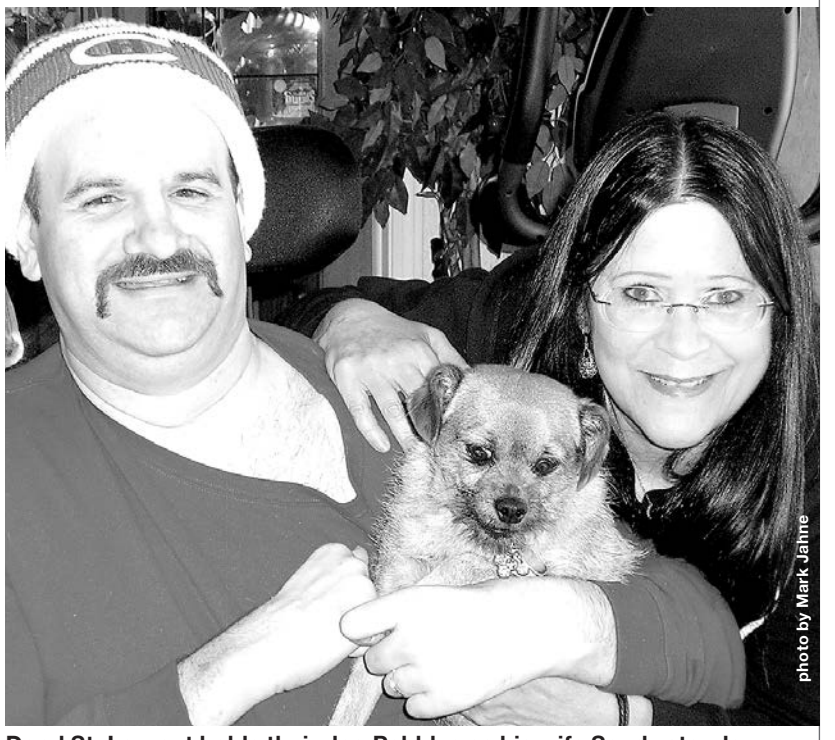


photo by Mark Jahne

Daryl St. Laurent holds their dog Pebbles as his wife Sandy stands alongside. The dog is featured in a 2016 animal calendar.

Meet Cornelius Uliano

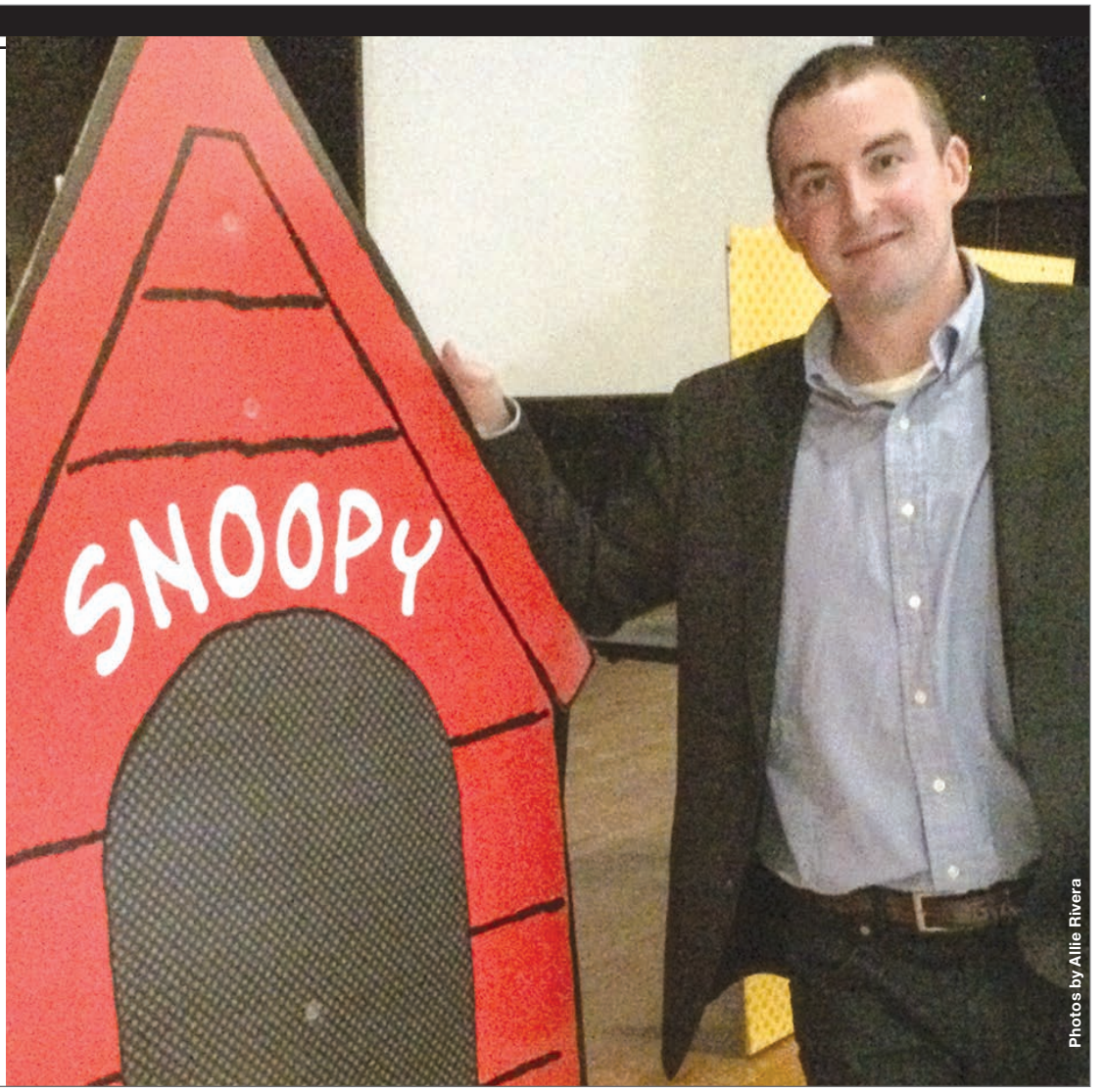
'Peanuts' writer stays true to Charles Schulz and his hometown

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

American movies, songs and books are filled with tales of young people hoping to make it big and get out of their small town. One of Newington's success stories happily returned to his roots to share his story with local students.

"It's true, I once sat in your very seats," Cornelius Uliano told the crowd of students filling the auditorium at John Wallace Middle School.

A town native who went through the district's schools along with the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts, Uliano has gone on to become a screenwriter in Los Angeles, most recently collaborating with the son and grandson of cartoonist Charles Schulz on the new "Peanuts" movie.



Photos by Allie Rivera

Newington native Cornelius Uliano returned to John Wallace Middle School to speak about his work as one of the three writers of the new "Peanuts" movie.

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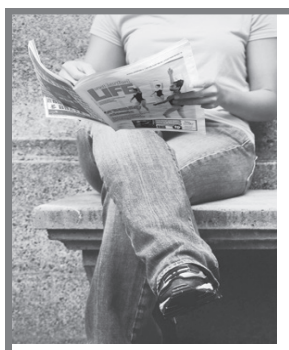

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He recalled his humble beginnings.

"When I was a kid I would make movies on my mom's VHS player," he said, pausing for a moment. "Do you guys even know what that is?"

After being met with a thunderous "no," Uliano laughed to himself and moved on.

"Any dream you have, it may take a long time and years of trying and trying to get there."

– Cornelius Uliano

"I always had a dream of being a filmmaker and making movies," he said.

Following his time in Newington, Uliano moved to California to attend school and study film. He learned more about the industry and discovered how difficult it could be to succeed.

"It took a lot of failure and not being successful many times over to get to where I am today," he said.

Uliano stayed in California and continued writing scripts on his own time as he took on different jobs, including working in the mail room at Paramount Pictures and delivering to such celebrities as Tom Cruise.

"All this time, though, I kept writing my scripts," he said. "Any dream you have, it may take a long time and years of trying and trying to get there."

After years of working toward his dream, a friend introduced him to an agent. One of Uliano's scripts, entitled "Imaginary Friends," was shopped around and eventually sold to Steven Spielberg.

"Even when I was succeeding, I was still failing because my movies never got made," Uliano said.

Roughly five years ago, that all began to change. He started working with Craig and Bryan Schulz, the son and grandson of Peanuts creator Charles Schulz, to develop a feature-length film with the iconic comic page characters.

According to Uliano, the family initially did not want to create a film for fear that modern-day humor and jokes would clash with the legacy that Schulz left behind. But eventually they changed their minds and decided to create a movie to honor him.

"Our movie is really true to Charles Schulz and the comics," Uliano said.

In 2010, he met with Craig and Bryan Schulz to start coming up with ideas of how to best represent the comics. Charles Schulz, known affectionately as Sparky, and his legacy were the driving force for the three men.

"Everything in this movie goes back to Sparky," Uliano said. "We wanted to make sure we honored him in every aspect of this movie."

One of the major steps in doing so was assembling a team of people who were just as invested in the Peanuts legacy as Uliano and the Schulz family.

"This was really important for us to get right," he said. "All these guys are really big Peanuts fans, like me."

Once the script was completed, animators at Blue Sky Studios in Greenwich began determining which era of the Peanuts comics should be represented.

"The designers went through every single strip and every single character," he explained. "We made concept paintings for each and every scene so we get an idea of the color, the lighting and the tone of each scene."

Making the movie perfectly meant making it imperfect. When Charles Schulz created his comic strips, he never used perfectly straight lines, and that became a priority in the making of the film.

"We made sure that we stayed true to his pen line," Uliano said. "Everything in this movie looked like Sparky drew it himself."

Creating any film from start to finish is a difficult process, but in this case making a film with such strong emotional ties was even more challenging.

"This wasn't an easy movie to make," Uliano said. "We put all of our resources into this movie and creating one great Peanuts film."

Part of making any movie is the musical score and Uliano said that was an important aspect of this film. He recalled watching the film play on a large wall behind a full orchestra as they recorded

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their score and seeing the reactions of his fellow writers.

"I remember Craig watching the movie he scored with a tear in his eye because he was so proud and he knew his dad would be so proud of what we were doing," he said.

Having the ability to come back to his hometown and speak to students at his old school was an honor.

"I think it's really important to come back here," he said. "Anyone that knows me knows how important Newington is to me."

He added that he hopes that by speaking to the students, he could inspire them to work hard for whatever their dreams may be.

"Just because you're from a smaller town like Newington doesn't mean you can't do it," Uliano said. "When I was their age, I wished there was someone who came back and talked to us."

He also made an impression on the teachers, many of whom remembered him from his days as a student.

"I remember Neil as a small kid, and then to learn how he turned out 16 years later from the last time I saw him, it's awesome," teacher Steve Markie said. "He's a role model. We can tell our kids, look, he was where you are 15 or 16 years ago."

Markie said he hopes students will understand Uliano's overall message of hard work and determination and apply it to themselves.

"He was just a kid who had a plan and look at what happened," Markie said. "I think it's really cool to see what can happen if you have a vision and work hard." **NL**

In creating the new "Peanuts" movie, writer Cornelius Uliano said that maintaining Charles Schulz's pen line was important.

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Ray is a 1-year-old male hound mix. He would fare best in a single-family home or condominium. Ray does not like cats and has no prior experience living with other dogs. He is sweet and friendly but also has a lot of energy and needs daily exercise. A family with prior general dog experience is the best fit for him. Obedience training is required as part of Ray's adoption plan.

Carlie is a gentle and loving feline who is 4 years old. A domestic middle hair with tiger and white markings, she prefers older children and teenagers and can cope with other animals in the home, as long as they are calm.

Inquiries about adoption may be made at the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Road, Newington. Call 860-594-4500. More information, including videos, can be found online at cthumane.org. Click on "Adopt" and "Newington." The Connecticut Humane Society is a private organization and has no time limits for adoption. **NL**

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January *calendar*

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					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

3 Learn how to use a RealPad Tablet, 10 a.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

5 Play With Us, 10:15 a.m., for young children who have special needs, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Let's Make Music Together, noon, for ages 2-4 and a caregiver, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, also Jan. 12, 19 and 26

7 Cozytime Stories, 4 p.m., for grades K-2, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Family Storytime, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, also Jan. 14, 21 and 28

Tech 4 U, 1:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, also 5:30 p.m. Jan. 28

Tech Troubleshooting with Teens, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, also 5:30 p.m. Jan. 28

8 Evening Book Discussion Group, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

9 Open House, Cedar Mountain Commons, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 3 John H. Stewart Drive, 860-665-7901 or harthosp.org/cedar-mountaincommons

11 Forever YA Book Club, 6 p.m., for age 14 through high school, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Read, Play, Learn, 6 p.m., for ages 3-4 and a caregiver, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

12 Brown Bag It with a Documentary, noon, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, also Jan. 19 and 26 and Feb. 2

Stories and Art, noon, for ages 2-4 and a caregiver, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Half Day Tuesday Treats, 2 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, also Jan. 26 and Feb. 9

Teen Advisory Board, 2 p.m., for ages 13-18, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

National Alliance on Mental Illness, 7 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-205-9542 or 860-830-2129

13 Jr. Cookbook Club, 6:30 p.m., for grades K-2, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

14 Snack & Study, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

MS Support Group, noon to 2 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-667-1314 or 860-236-2751

Brown Bag It With a Book, noon, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Useful Sites & Apps, 11 a.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

16 Tales to Tails, 1 p.m., read to a certified therapy dog, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, also 4:30 p.m. Jan. 21

20 Chess Club, 4 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Cookbook Club, 6:30 p.m., for grades 3-6, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

21 Edit and Share Your Holiday Photos with Picasa, 10:30 a.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

22 Friends Wine & Cheese Social, 6:30 p.m., $12 in advance or $15 at the door, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

23 Mystery Theater, 1:30 p.m., for grades 3-6, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

24 LEGO Junior Makerspace, 2 p.m., for ages 4-7 and a caregiver, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

25 Newington Kiwanis Club Hosts Police Chief Stephen Clark, 7 p.m., Paradise Pizza, 10 East St., New Britain, 860-594-4495

26 GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club, 6 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-666-4371

30 Construction Club, 1 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

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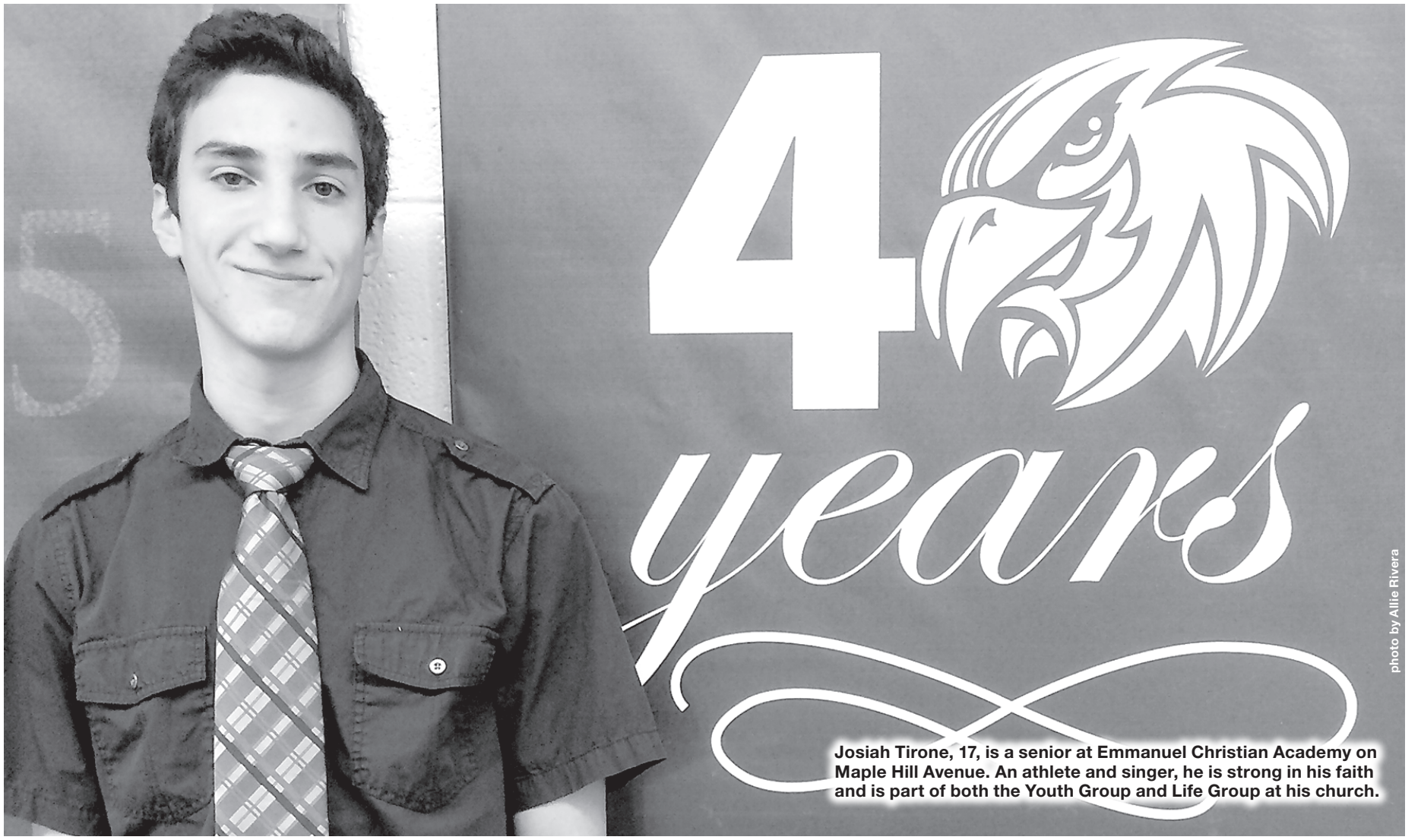

photo by Allie Rivera

Josiah Tirone, 17, is a senior at Emmanuel Christian Academy on Maple Hill Avenue. An athlete and singer, he is strong in his faith and is part of both the Youth Group and Life Group at his church.

Student of the month

He's striving for both an academic and spiritual education

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Josiah Tirone has a strong handshake and propensity for looking people directly in the eye as he speaks to them. Standing tall in the main office of Emmanuel Christian Academy on Maple Hill Avenue, he greeted each person he saw by name and stepped back to hold open the door for a fellow student, a move that those in the office said is characteristic for him.

The 17-year-old student is now in his senior year at Emmanuel Christian Academy. A resident of

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East Haddam, Josiah has been commuting to Newington for school for the past eight years.

Academics are an important part of his life. Math is his favorite subject because he is "a concept person" and he is taking pre-calculus.

At the end of his freshman year he was inducted into the American Christian Honor Society, a national organization of the American Association of Christian Schools that seeks to advance Christian scholarship, challenge Christian leadership, honor Christian character and stimulate Christian service.

"It's a group for Christian kids that keep a certain GPA and have a Christian influence on people," Josiah said. "They pick people based on their grades and their attitude."

His faith is a large part of his life. Along with attending the academy, he also goes to his church in Haddam each weekend and has demonstrated his spirituality both in and out of the classroom.

"Josiah is a senior this year and has demonstrated real growth over the last year, both spiritually and academically," Secondary Administrator Glenn Mason said. "In a time when all young people are exposed to so many negative distractions, Josiah has chosen to follow his Savior and stand against the immorality so prevalent in our society."

Josiah is a member of both the Youth Group and the Life Group at his church. While the Youth Group, which meets every Wednesday, is comprised primarily of teenagers, the Life Group is for members and friends of all ages.

"We get together every Thursday and we just talk about what we're going through every week and what our walk has been with God," Josiah said.

Both of these groups seek out opportunities to give back in their community however they can. Recently, members of the Life Group learned about a local woman whose husband had been hospitalized. They raked her leaves and took care of her lawn while she was caring for her husband.

"It's little things that we can do to help out," Josiah said.

Within his school, he is recognized for his leadership abilities and willingness to step forward to assist when needed.

"He has consistently demonstrated strong leadership skills as well and seems more comfortable in that role," Mason said.

"In a time when all young people are exposed to so many negative distractions, Josiah has chosen to follow his Savior and stand against the immorality so prevalent in our society."

– Secondary Administrator Glenn Mason

Josiah is involved in a wide variety of school activities. A bass in the choir, he has been singing since he began attending the academy and will soon join his fellow choir singers at the Governor's Mansion in Hartford to sing Christmas carols.

"I'm kind of excited," he said. "I've always had stuff going on before so I couldn't do it, but this year I'm going. We got invited one year and I guess the governor likes us so we've gotten invited ever since."

In addition to his musical endeavors, he is also an athlete, playing on the school's soccer and basketball teams. He began playing basketball in the seventh grade but soccer is his favorite sport.

"I've played soccer here since eighth grade but I've played ever since I was a kid," he said.

Though he loves the sport, he typically does not follow any professional leagues.

"I prefer to play it," he said. "I'm not one for sitting and watching. I'd rather be in the action."

He joined with some of his friends, including recent graduates from Emmanuel Christian Academy, to begin their own indoor soccer league at a facility in Glastonbury.

"A guy that graduated from here a couple years ago grabbed a bunch of us to play, so we do that," Josiah said.

When not focusing on his studies, volunteering with his church or running around the soccer field, he enjoys playing video games on his Xbox 360 or spending time with his older siblings Abigail, 21, and J.P., 19.

Staying active, being close to his family and giving back are the most important things in his life.

"I just enjoy helping people," Josiah said. **NL**

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LIFE *in the classroom*

Fourth-graders are busy crafting human bodies

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

John Paterson School fourth-graders, from left, Kara Roberts, Mia Golec and Taylor Ronski, all 9, balanced a pencil box and a handful of books on a taped piece of paper to demonstrate how the cylindrical shape of bones makes them naturally strong.

Photos by Allie Rivera

In John Wozniak's fourth grade classroom at John Paterson School, a swatch of bubble wrap is not simply a swatch of bubble wrap, and red and blue yarn is more than just yarn. These materials came to life in his recent assignment about the human body.

"They used everyday household items to create human body systems," the teacher said.

"We used felt for the heart and masking tape for the bones and bubble wrap for the lungs. It was refreshing to take a step back and grab some glue and let the kids get a little messy."

He has taught the human body systems to classes in past years but this was the first time Wozniak chose to use an art project as what he called the culminating celebration to the unit. He called the student response incredibly positive.

"It's funny because as the kids are pulling out supplies, it's not yarn anymore, it's 'I need more veins,'" he said. "To them, it was authentic."

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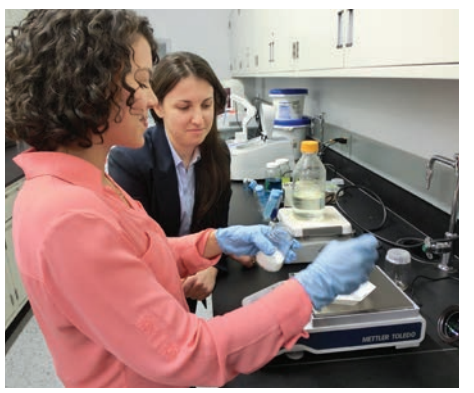
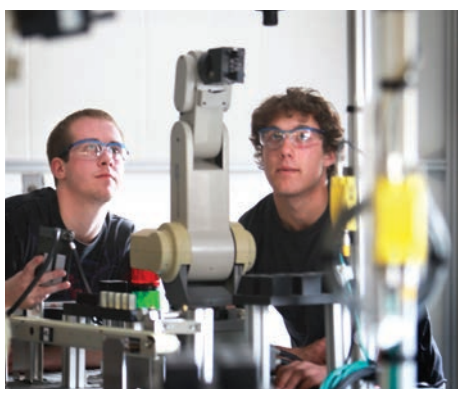

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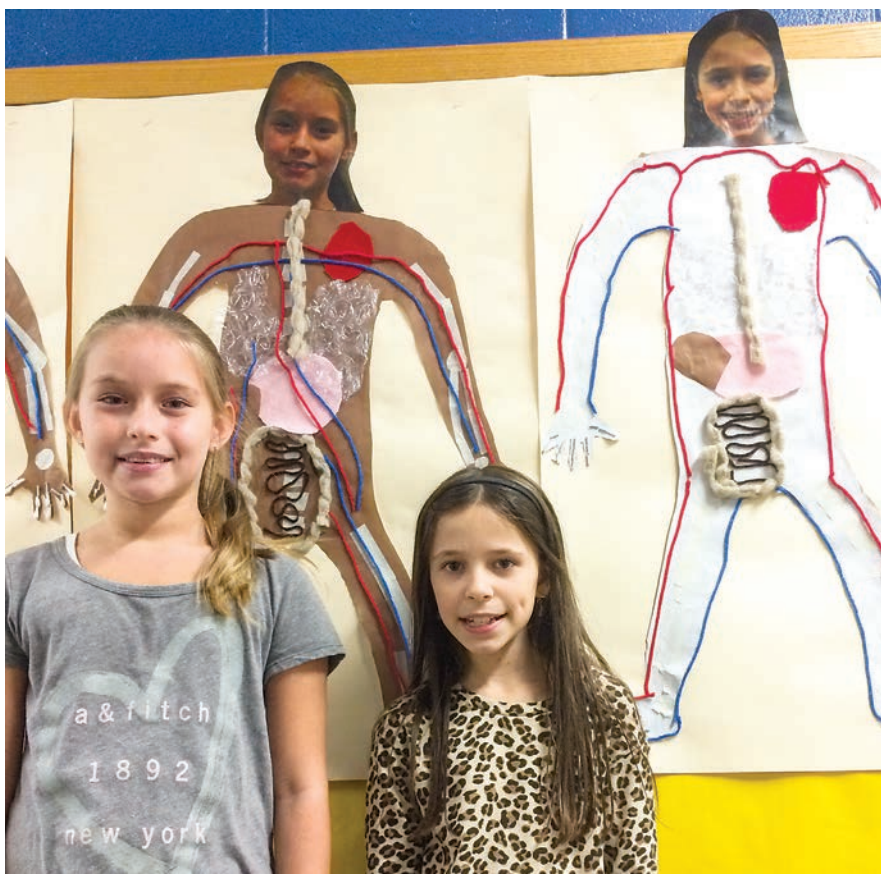

Fourth-graders Milena Kluska, left, and Kara Roberts, both 9, stood beside their human body systems that they created in John Wozniak's fourth grade classroom. The project was a culminating celebration of a larger science unit that had students learning about the various systems of the body.

Crafting their own versions of bodies was only one piece of the overall unit that they spent a few weeks completing.

"We've been working on our own parts of the body and we've been learning a lot about how they work," 9-year-old Anna McGoldrick said.

Students were broken down into small groups of four or five and assigned a specific system of the body, such as the respiratory, nervous, digestive, skeletal or muscular.

"Outside of it being a physical, hands-on thing, there's embedded learning in it."

– John Wozniak

"Each group became an expert on that body system and then presented to the class," Wozniak said.

To prepare for those presentations, students worked together using the technology provided by the district's one-to-one Chromebook initiative that provides each student with a laptop computer to use in school. Using Google programs, they create documents and slideshows together and are able to work on the same document from their individual computers in school or at home.

"It's an integration of science, math and technology," Wozniak said.

During this unit, students learned about how to conduct research and take notes using both print and online sources. As a group, they then took the information they gathered from their variety of sources to create Google Slides, similar to a PowerPoint presentation, which they showed to the rest of their classmates.

Using print resources within the classroom, they also were tasked with selecting an activity to show

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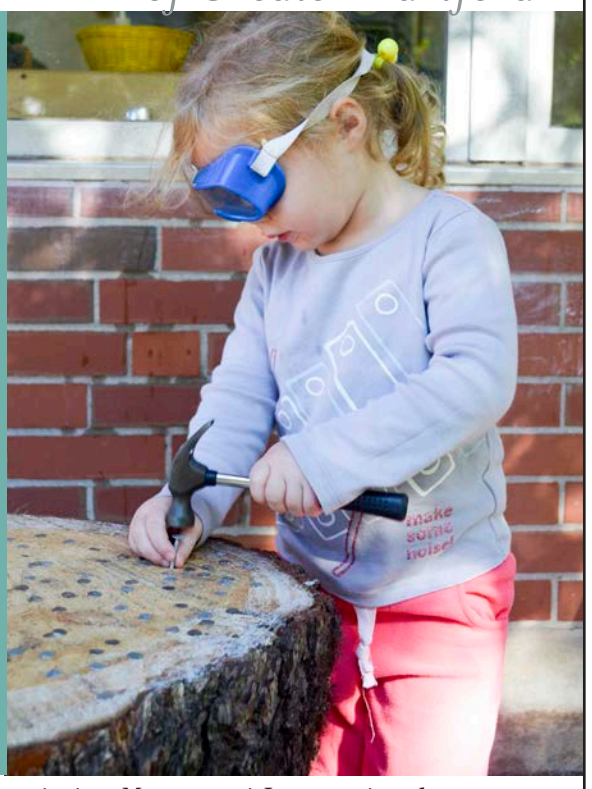

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EDUCATION

Collin Karanian, left, and Luke Canepari, both 9, demonstrate how the dome shape of the skull is especially protective by attempting to squeeze uncooked eggs.

the class that would demonstrate the system they presented.

"Outside of it being a physical, hands-on thing, there's embedded learning in it," Wozniak said. "I don't know what they each picked to do so I'm looking forward to it."

One group, which presented on the skeletal system, demonstrated two different activities to the class. Nine-year-olds Collin Karanian and Luke Canepari brought in uncooked eggs and attempted to squeeze them the long way to see if they would crack.

"This experiment shows how the dome shape in your head is hard to crack," Luke explained to his classmates.

The boys' difficulty in breaking the eggs confirmed why the dome shape of the skull is so protective. Following that experiment, the three girls in the skeletal group conducted a demonstration to show how the cylindrical shape of bones can sustain a great amount of pressure.

"Cylinder shapes, like bones, are strong," Taylor Ronski, 9, said. "But if you put too much pressure on it, it will break."

Along with partners Kara Roberts and Mia Golec, both 9, Taylor taped two separate pieces of paper into cylinder shapes. Standing one of them up on a desk, the girls were able to balance a pencil box and small stack of books on the paper without it cracking or falling.

The other cylinder, which they lay sideways, was immediately crushed by the weight of one small book. By conducting these activities during their presentations, Wozniak hopes to further instill his lessons.

"It's amazing to see how far the kids have come in such a short amount of time," he said.

With this unit completed, he is already looking forward to next year to determine how he can make the lessons even better. He found the art piece to be both fun and informative and hopes to do it again next year with a new twist.

"I'm thinking we could use wax paper to create layers, so it's more detailed," he said. "For example, one day we talk about the skeletal system, and we make that layer and add it."

He enjoys putting together units such as this one that work to combine aspects of science with art, technology and writing, and he hopes to continue creating diverse lesson plans for his students. **NL**

Students in John Wozniak's fourth grade class at John Paterson School created their own versions of human body systems using common materials such as yarn for veins and bubble wrap for lungs.

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Slice of LIFE

photos by Mark Jahne

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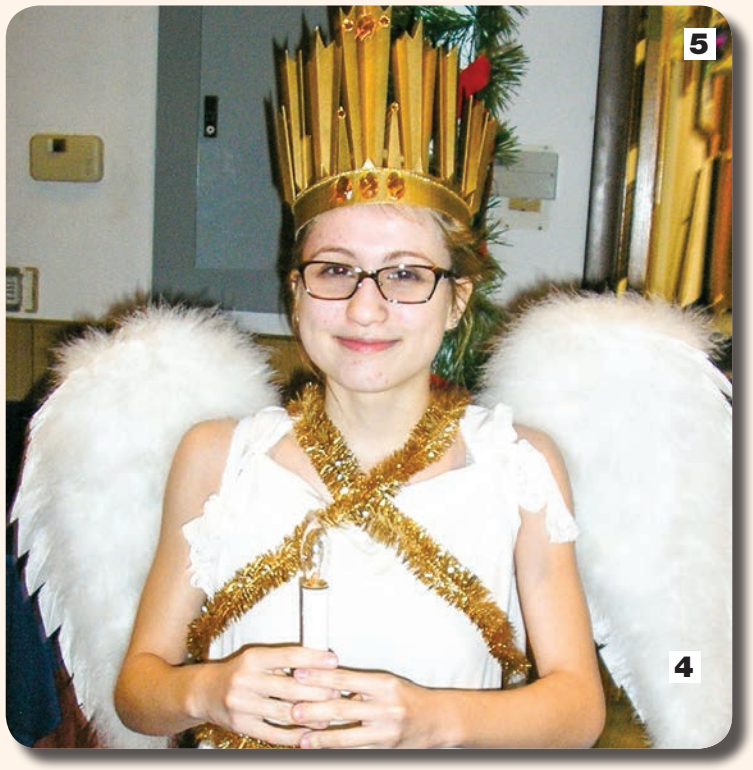
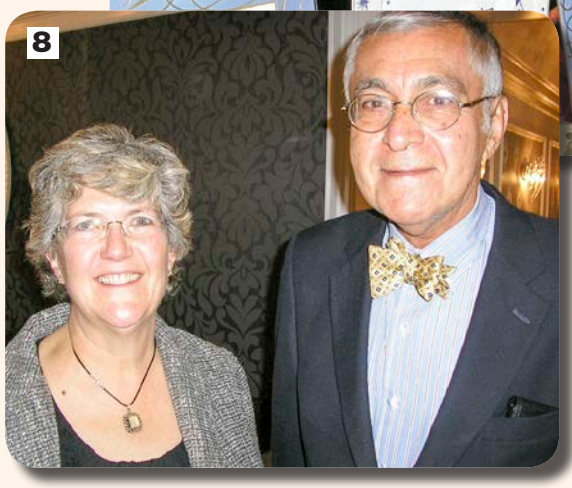

5

Celebrating Christmas, German style

1. The Hartford Saengerbund held its biennial Christkindlmarkt (Christmas Market) over Thanksgiving weekend. Freddie and Susan Meier donned traditional attire and greeted guests as they entered the festivities. **2.** St. Nicholas, portrayed by Eric Hartleb of Newington, moved about wishing everyone "Frohe Weihnachten" (Merry Christmas). **3.** Club historian and artist Hans Weiss had a booth where he sold prints of his work. **4.** Maria Meier greets her grandfather Alfred Meier. **5.** Shaylynn Frazon of Newington was the Christkindl, or Christmas angel. She presided over the lighting of the Christmas tree each afternoon.



Wine and chocolate

7. Kathy Braga of B&M Tree Service served as the mistress of ceremonies. **8.** Mayor Roy Zartarian enjoys the festivities with Kathleen Marie Clark. **9.** The Newington Chamber of Commerce held its annual Silent Auction, Wine Tasting and Chocolate Challenge the evening of Nov. 14 at The Hawthorne in Berlin. Alexander Scott of Duksa Family Funeral Homes, vice president of the chamber board, staffed a table where people could purchase mystery bottles of wine. **10.** Heather Hitchcock of Hartford Healthcare Senior Services and Michael Montgomery of Picture This Productions were among the many board members who helped out.

6. Deanna Reney of Karma's Closet Consignment Boutique helped with the raffle prizes. She is a member of the chamber board of directors.

Your thoughts:

This month we asked residents:
"What is your favorite holiday movie?"
Here are some of their responses.

"It's not a movie, it's a show, but 'A Charlie Brown Christmas.' I just watched it on TV the other night."
– Sarah Bailly

"'How the Grinch Stole Christmas.'I like the newer one with Jim Carrey. It brought it all to life for a new generation."
– Myrna Cambrelen

"I'm more traditional, so I like 'A Christmas Carol.'"
– Maria Oliveros

News roundup

1

2

photo by Mark Jahne

Byron tackles fraud

1. State Rep. Gary Byron hosted an AARP Fraud Prevention Forum Nov. 19 at the Newington Senior & Disabled Center. Officials from AARP were on hand to guide residents through the complicated process of securing their financial and personal data from fraud and hackers.

The AARP Fraud Watch Network also offers numerous details about fraud protection. Byron said he hopes to host an additional forum with AARP experts in the spring.

Board sets priorities

The Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools William Collins met Nov. 23 to identify the board's priorities and guidelines. The district held a board retreat where members met with administrators for three hours to discuss strategic focus areas, district goals, and the needs of each of the seven public schools.

The board then established 11 priorities and guidelines that will guide the district's vision for local students.

They are: improve student achievement; ensure all students are college, career and citizenship ready; optimize the integration of technology into instruction; increase access to early childhood education; provide infrastructure and environment that fosters modern learning; increase opportunities for extended and enhanced learning; increase the number of students who are fluent in two or more languages; attract, develop, support and retain professional talent; continue support for the arts, athletics and student activities; recognize the ability of the community to support education; and address state and federal initiatives.

UNICO collects clothing

2. The Newington chapter of UNICO held its fourth annual Warm Winter Woolies clothing drive Nov. 14 at the Lucy Robbins Welles Library. Items collected were donated to Newington Human Services and the House of Bread soup kitchen in Hartford.

Community members donated coats, jackets, sweaters, hoodies, sweatshirts, sweatpants, socks, hats, mittens, scarves and gloves. UNICO then packed and delivered the items to the two recipient agencies.

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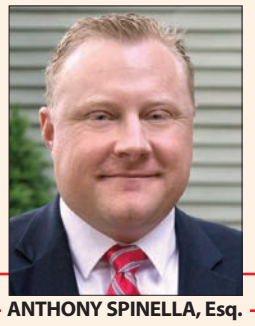
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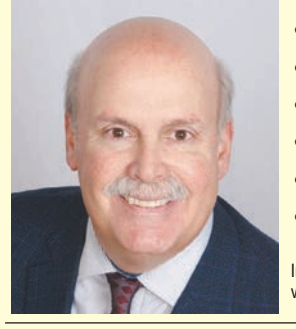

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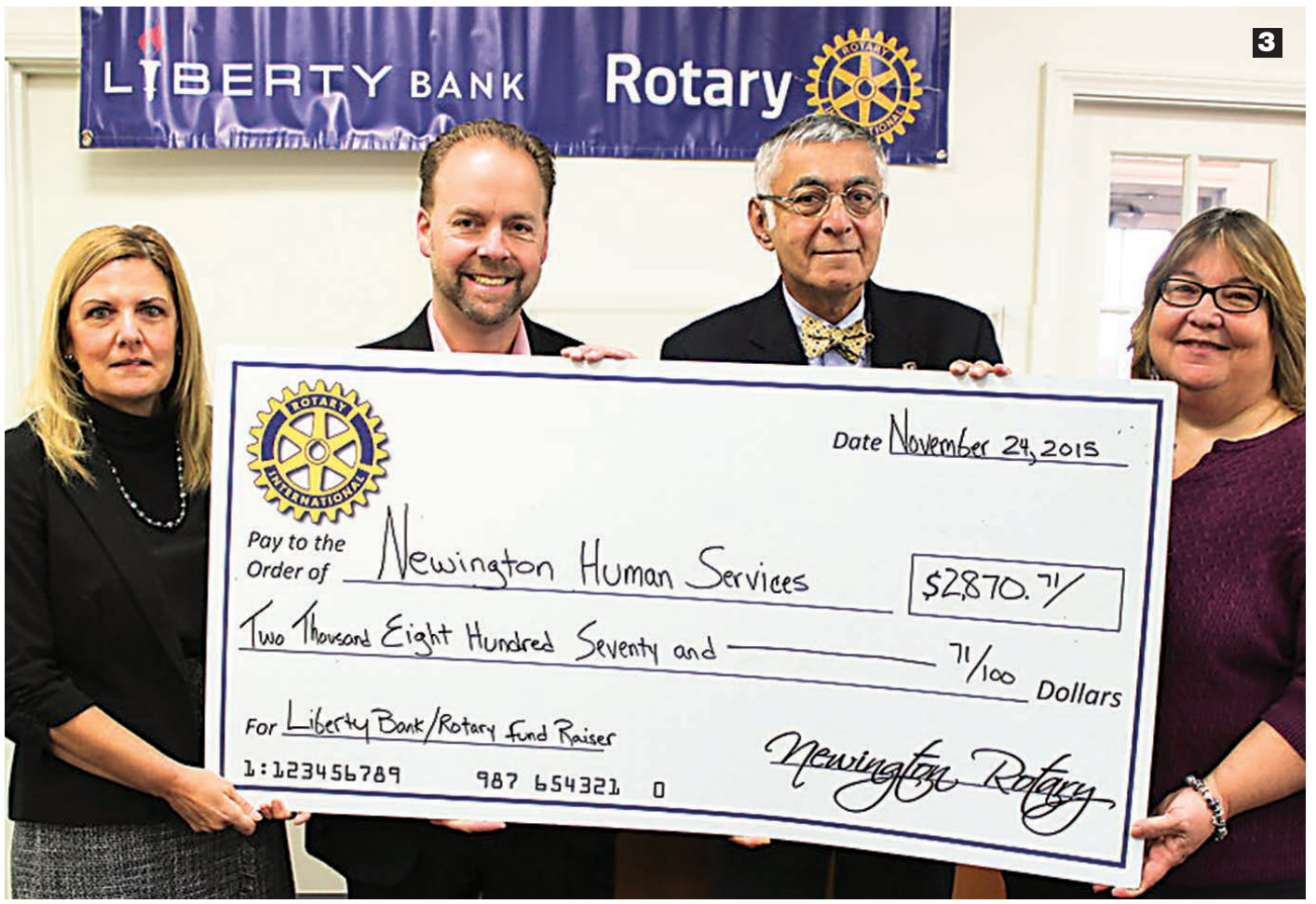
Rotary, bank raise funds

3. The Newington Rotary Club and the Liberty Bank branch in town raised $2,289 and received matching funds of $572 from the Liberty Bank Foundation, for a total of $2,861. The funds were donated to Newington Human Services.

Thirty-four Rotary clubs and the East Haddam Lions Club teamed up with 48 Liberty Bank offices to raise $213,965 during the weeks after Columbus Day. At the end of the drive, the Liberty Bank Foundation added 25 cents for each dollar raised, totaling $53,491.

Rotarians either use the funds to purchase and deliver Thanksgiving food to needy families or donate the money to a local non-profit organization that provides Thanksgiving baskets. All donations are used to provide food in the communities where the money was given. **NL**



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Mirella, Mary Anne, Joan, Dan, Cynthia and Karen

Happy Holidays and a Very Happy 2016!

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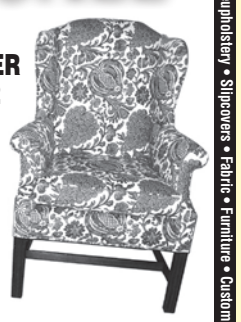

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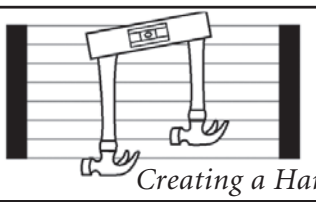

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Editorial

What will the new year bring?

It's hard to believe that Christmas, Hanukkah and the new year are already upon us. Didn't we just celebrate those holidays a few months ago?

Time flies along unless, of course, one is waiting for an airplane, train, high-priority package or check to arrive. Then it drags on as if running in quicksand.

As the holidays approach, they bring with them joy and hope for better times. Everyone looks at the arrival of Jan. 1 as an opportunity to refresh their outlook, make resolutions to improve their lives and hope – maybe even pray – that whatever difficulties befell them this year will not return.

The economy is creeping upward, but it has a long way to go to catch up to the pre-recession days of 2006. Too many people are still looking for work without any luck.

Municipal leaders enter the new year wondering how they will be able to hold the line on taxes without cutting deeply into programs and services that residents want and need. They certainly can't expect any help from state government, not when it is facing an overwhelming budget deficit.

Just how did that happen, anyway? There was a time when the state got by just fine with the money it had. Then the lottery was created, but over time that extra revenue wasn't enough.

Along came Indian gaming, a huge boost to state coffers. That wasn't enough, either. So a personal state income tax was passed. Surely that would provide more than enough money to fund everything that needed funding.

Guess again. All it did was give state lawmakers more money to play with and they spent it all – and then some. That's something we all may want to remember when they run for new terms in November 2016.

Speaking of elections, next November will finally mark the end of a presidential campaign that has already dragged on much too long.

Will Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton remain the front-runners of the Republican and Democratic parties, respectively? A lot can change between now and November.

But let's not get caught up in political angst. It is the holiday season, after all, a time of love and brotherhood and good cheer that everyone can enjoy regardless of faith, race, ethnicity or any other defining characteristic.

Let's focus on that and enjoy all the season has to offer. We wish all of our readers and advertisers a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and prosperous new year. **NL**

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Snap a photo around town, share it on Instagram, and you might see it in these pages.

Letters to the editor

Safety must be the first priority

To the Editor:
We must say no, now. Governor Malloy is wrong. Connecticut must not become a haven for thousands of Syrian refugees.

The president, governor and even Sen. Richard Blumenthal are claiming that it is our duty as Americans to assist with the humanitarian crisis by allowing refugees into our towns and cities. While I care deeply about the welfare of this displaced population, we must put the safety of our residents first.

Governor Malloy must fulfill his number-one priority to the citizens of our towns and state. It has been confirmed that a Syrian refugee was one of the recent Paris attackers. One hundred twenty-nine people died in these attacks and scores were injured.

How much evidence is needed before our governor makes a common-sense decision and halts any flow of Syrian refugees into our state? It seems as if his main priority is not on your safety.

Thirty states have announced that they would block Syrian refugees from resettling within their borders. Maine, New Hampshire and even our neighbor Massachusetts will no longer accept them. Let's not forget that the Tsarnaev brothers were refugees as well.

The governors of these 30 states are listening to their residents. They are being strong leaders in this time of crisis, in spite of the lack of leadership and direction from our president.

Connecticut's deficit is sky high. We don't have the funds necessary to fund intellectual and developmental disabled programs for our state's most vulnerable, let alone to house thousands of refugees. We still have homeless veterans on our streets.

Residents are flocking from the state en masse. Large employers are moving to other states with all of the jobs. We are in shambles. It's time for our leaders to start making the right decisions.

It's called common sense, Governor Malloy. Ninety percent of Connecticut residents want Syrian refugees to be blocked from resettling here. Listen to them. Keep Connecticut safe. Be our leader. Tell our federal officials no.

–Gary Byron
State Representative

Refugees are not a threat

To the Editor:
I appeal to our newly elected Mayor Roy Zartarian to publicly support Governor Malloy in his welcome to Syrian refugees. Before Roy was elected, I was greatly moved to read the Zartarian family story in the newspaper – how they came to the U.S. as refugees from the Armenian genocide.

Now it's time to pay that experience forward in extending a welcoming hand to the Syrians fleeing a brutal regime and the horrors of war.

These are decent families – from elderly grandparents to suckling babes – who are appealing to the world community for safe haven after seeing their homes destroyed, their jobs lost, and friends and family members brutally murdered, with no promise of peace or security for the future.

My own ancestors fled the famine in Ireland and many of my friends are descendants from Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust. Do we now need to dismantle the Statue of Liberty as an obsolete remnant of the past when immigrants were welcomed to help build this great nation?

I was appalled to read letters from two prominent Republican politicians opposing this humanitarian effort. They would do well to re-read the Ten Commandments, especially as regards loving thy neighbor as thy love thyself.

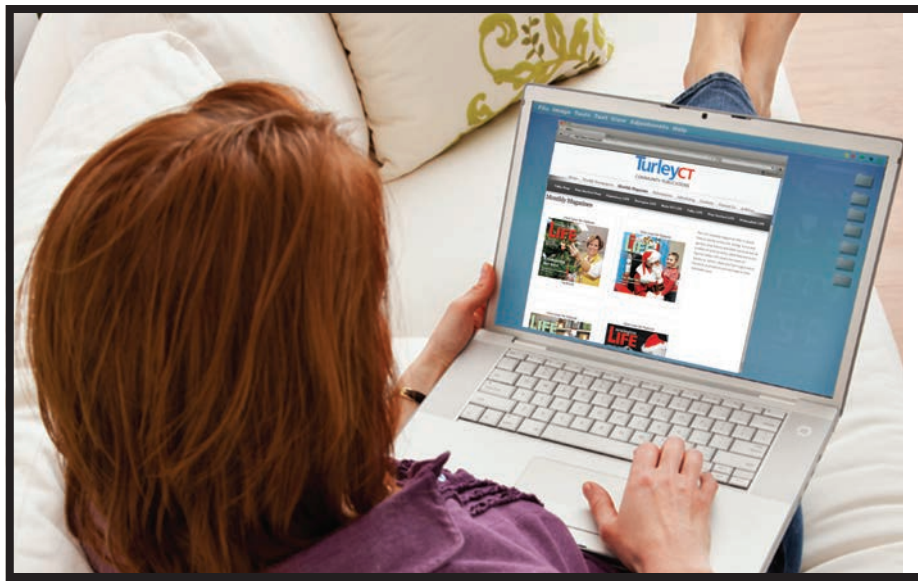
The Ten Commandments were carved in stone – not written on papyrus – because they were meant to last through the ages. These are God's commandments, not God's suggestions. If we expect to meet a merciful God after our death, surely we must practice his mercy here in our lifetimes.

The vetting process for refugees is thorough, where the offices of Immigration, Homeland Security, the CIA and others take anywhere from 18 to 24 months to complete. I applaud Governor Malloy for leading our state in this most urgent and pressing humanitarian effort and I urge all Newington residents to contact their representatives.

Show them that our values have not been lost to self-interest and fear. Mayor Zartarian, I hope that, as part of a refugee family who benefitted from asylum in the U.S., you would add your voice to those of the decent people of our town and state who whole-heartedly welcome Syrian refugees.

A formal resolution from our Town Council would send this message loudly and clearly.

–Cece Borjeson



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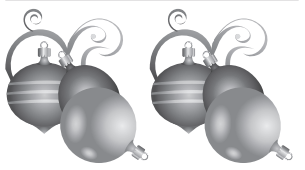

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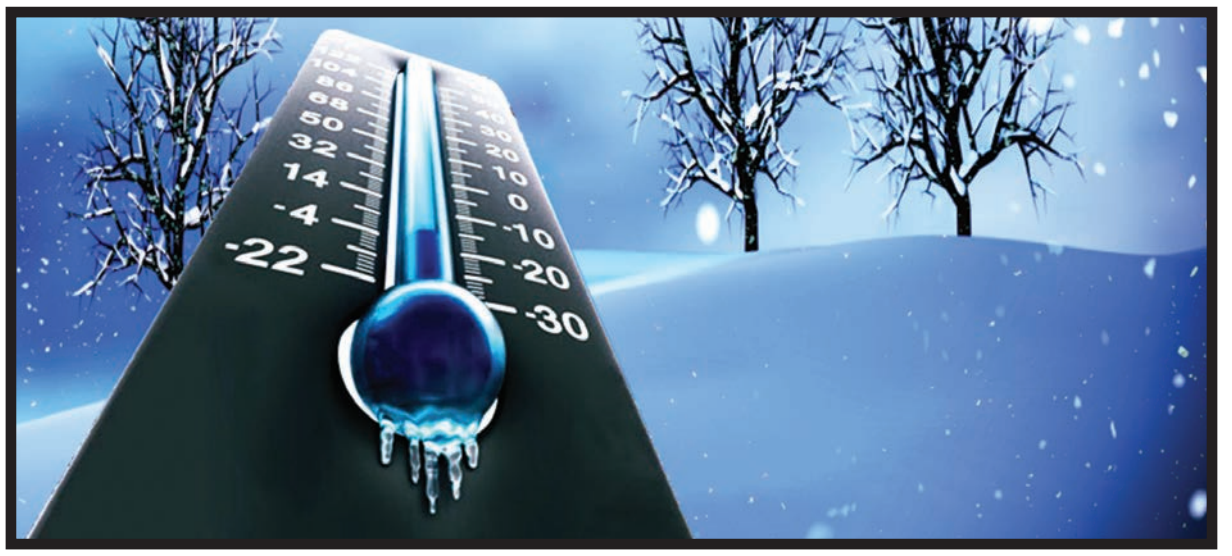

Averages, and Extremes...

Climatologically speaking, January is the coldest month on record here in Connecticut. However, last year, it was February that made headlines – not only the coldest February since records have been kept, but the coldest of all months!

No matter if it's hot, or cold... dry, or wet...we're always crunching numbers. It's important to know how the weather we are dealing with compares to the past. It helps us make correlations and to track trends over time.

The term normal can be somewhat misleading, "average" is more appropriate in many cases. When talking about temperatures being "above" or "below" or even when it comes to rain/snow with a "surplus" or "deficit" ...the values we are using as points of reference are based on a mathematical average over a 30 year timespan, typically three consecutive decades.

So, specifically for the month of January... how does the month shape up? On the 1st, the average low is 19 while the average high is 35. By the end of the month, there is not much fluctuation... 18 and 35, respectively. For snow, 12.3 inches is average.

In the realm of extremes, January of 2011 holds the record for snowiest with 54.3 inches. The coldest temperature recorded in the month was 26 degrees below zero, in 1961! On the flipside, the warmest temperature recorded in the 31 day period was 72, in 2007. **NL**

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